

"The Underground, Practical Approach to Planning for and Implementing WFU for Beginners"



Or, Uncle Stu* Sez:

"If Wildland Fire use was easy, they would call it suppression!"

* Uncle Stu is named in honor of Stewart Edward White, a novelist and timber land owner who carried the torch for "light burning" or "Paíute forestry" from 1916 thru the early 20's in conflict with the USFS 10 AM full suppression policy that was developed after the 1910 fires.

Disclaimer – This document is not intended to represent policy for any agency. It is intended to be a useful "how to" guide to assist you in WFU planning & implementation within your agency's policies and guidelines.

WFU and Its Future Relationship to Suppression Incidents

There's a movement afoot to do away with the term Wildland Fire Use and just go with Appropriate Management Response (AMR) for every wildland fire (except for prescribed fire).

There's a new Forest Service document out there that you folks need to read. "Wildland Fire Management Efficiencies – Implementation Guidelines, July 2007" covers the AMR response, strategic objective determination and development of long term implementation plans. Though is from a Forest Service perspective, there are a lot of commonalities between agencies and this is a good start to determining what you need to do and where things are going.

There's an attempt underway to write a National Interagency Policy. We'll see how that works out. If Uncle Stu sees the future right (and that's a big if) sooner or later we won't have the administrative divisions of wildland fire, just AMR. Even the holy grail of WFU training, S-580 Advanced Fire Use Applications, is now talking about "confinement strategies", and "...an understanding of the implementation process for appropriate management response"

We can divvy up wildland fire into two categories:

Short Term Incidents – Where due to values at risk and/or social and political factors we do the same traditional anchor and flank tactics and try to put the fire out as soon as possible.

Long Term Incidents – This is where WFU, fires we can't catch, or have low values at risk or have significant firefighter safety issues fit. All of the information listed here is equally valid for any long term incident no matter what we call it. Good planning, point protection, public outreach, relying on fire behavior and thinking outside of the box is a requirement for anything that will be a long term incident. So when you read this – just think AMR instead of WFU, so when the changes come, you're already there. Just change Stage I and Stage II to Short Term Implementation Plan and Stage 3 to Long Term Implementation Plan.

Uncle Stu sez - I kin remember sittin' on the IC calls in Montana in 2007 and hearin' the ICs of "regular" IMTs kinda choke when they tried to git out the term Management Action Point when discussin' their fires. The Northern Rockies Area actually had teams out doin' long term plans fer these folks. Ya could tell that these folks didn't unnerstand or agree with this (In 2006 Uncle Stu saw the same in Idaho an' herd stories about ICT2s who refused ta do anythin but anchor and flank). It'll be a hot topic fer winter discussions, but ya kin see the future commin' and lots of folks don' like it.

Folks it's called "paradigm change"

Till then, us folks that do WFU will jest continue on our way planning for long term events and managin' 'em no matter what they're called.

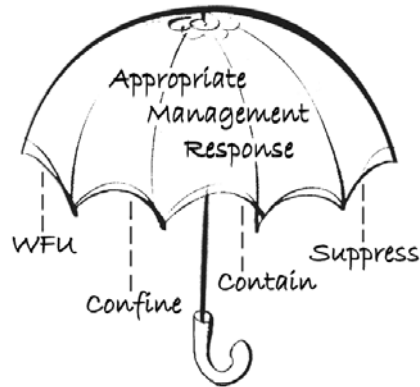
Course then we got some folks in WFU who don't think we oughta be doin' long term suppression events – but see above – paradigms change an' the cultural purity of WFU is goin' by the wayside (Uncle Stu will be kinda disappointed to see it go himself, but he's lived thru 10:00 AM policy, Prescribed Natural Fire (PNF), WFU and now AMR – gotta be fluid 'cause flexible is way too rigid.

But till then ...

Da' Basics According to Uncle Stu:

*** Firefighter and Public Safety is #1 – Always – no matter what strategy you chose for the fire.**

* WFU fits under the Appropriate Management Response Umbrella, jes like pull-the-plug full suppression actions that we all know and luv.



* "Wildland fire use is a direct component of wildland fire management. It is a management action equal to wildfire suppression and thus, constitutes an emergency action. It receives consideration, management attention, and management policies equal to wildfire suppression," ('cept of course when it means getting' rehab bucks). **Wildland Fire Use, Implementation Procedures Reference Guide, 2005**. This is policy – understand? Don't believe it? – try readin' the 2001 Update to the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

* Right now we're kinda stuck with the following – but minds better'n Uncle Stu's are workin' on it (the guys who wrote this are retired and gettin' paid big bucks to work for a think tank).

-“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.”

-“Human caused wildland fires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.”

-“Once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefit objectives.”

**Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy
June 20, 2003**

What WFU ain't:

-It ain't a “let it burn” philosophy.

-It don't have to be restricted to the “Back 40” or Wilderness/Wilderness Study Areas (WSA).

-It don't do away with suppression. Areas with active WFU programs still suppress over 90% of their fires.

-They ain't all big. Probably 95% remain less than 10 acres.

- It ain't limited by ownership/agency boundaries.

- It ain't always cheaper.

- It ain't always easy

“Let it Burn” – This ain’t never been nor will ever be a policy. It was ancient language from our buds in Alaska and the press (god luv’em) adopted this term in 1988 for the Yellowstone fires (I know it’s ancient history – but Uncle Stu was there) and it caught on among the public – yep, we got a public perception problem.

* No it ain’t always **cheaper**. With all this new fangled cost containment and pressure on our bosses to save money and do things on the cheap – we’ve been fed the line that this will make life cheaper and leave a few pennies for all those other resource programs. Yo folks, ever fire’s different and some cost more than others, it’s a fact of life, get used to it. That said – we waste a heck of a lot of dollars tryin’ to catch the fire at the next ridge (ever body thinks that one more shift or one more crew and they can catch that sucker – it ain’t always so), so compared to the biggun in 2006 in Washington - Tripod (\$500/acre), or some of them other bigguns that burn till the snow flies the WFU/AMR strategy is gonna be cheaper. In 2007 the really big AMR incidents in Idaho on the Payette and Boise NFs came in at about \$100 to \$175 per acre and the WFU was at about \$25 per acre. So maybe there’s something to it.

* WFU strategies and tactics are only good fer WFU. **WRONG** – they can be applied to any long term fire. ‘Course then, many of Uncle Stu’s buds in the suppression world don’ wanna do them, but hey, “the times they are a changing” as a certain folk singer said.

** YOU and a lot of other folks have to really believe in WFU and be committed to it.*



It's too late not to "believe" now and there ain't any "do overs" at this stage

- You Are Committed-

If you follow Uncle Stu's Lessons, you have a better chance of meetin' all 3 of the above and having a success.

Remember WFU is:

**The Right Fire
At the Right Time
In the Right Place**

-With a Good Plan that is Followed and Grows as the WFU Does-

Da' Good - Ya the both of 'em dependent on Fire Regime:



Da' Bad:



Da' ugly:



Uncle Stu's Lessons

(Learned at the University of Hard Knocks – an he's got the scars to prove it)

1- Uncle Stu sez – *“Got all your plannin' done? Not just the big stuff but all the little stuff too?”*

There are several layers of planning that need to be done.

The biggies are:

- A. It has to be in your Land Management Plan (Forest Plan, Resource Mgmt Plan, etc)
- B. It must be addressed and planned for in your Fire Mgmt Plan (FMP)

Within these you have to decide on your goals, objectives and vision of what you want – At the Land Management Plan level, having the general overall goals and objectives and areas for WFU are good. When you get to the individual Fire Management Unit (FMU) or smaller analysis areas, be fairly specific, because when the fire starts you need to become very specific. Here you deal with specific resource issues that may change over time. Identify your “values at risk” for each WFU area and how far are you willing to go to protect them? If you're in a wilderness – how much “unnatural” i.e. mechanical stuff (an' how much of the heavy metal), camps, etc. do you want used?

The little **CRITICAL** ones that need to be done **annually** include:

- A. Pre-season contacts with your permittees (all of them)
- B. Pre-season contacts with your adjoining landowners (private, state and federal)
- C. Working with your local resources staffs to agree on objectives, processes, etc.
- D. What type of closures are you willing to consider based on seasonality, public safety, hunting season, etc?
- E. Pre-season Seasonal Risk Analysis. A Seasonal Risk Analysis requires fire managers to review current and predicted weather and fuels information, compare this information with historic weather and fuels records, and predict the upcoming fire season's severity and duration for any given area. Information from a Seasonal Risk Analysis can be one of the tools used to determine if or when it is appropriate to utilize wildland fire for resource benefit.
- F. Site specific recommendations for the Line Officer, based on environmental conditions and their risk taking comfort level.

2- Uncle Stu sez – *“Can you say agreements?”*

Agreements with your neighbors (federal, state, local and **private**) are critical, especially if the fire has the potential to cross ownerships. Otherwise you're either stuck doing last minute line digging and or wiping the egg off your face and looking at potential claims. Each state has different laws pertaining to wildland fire, so you need to check out your state laws before you put these together. You have to talk with the Office of General Council (USFS) or the Solicitor (DOI) as well – they really are there to help (I think). Our good buddies in the Rocky Mtn Area have some agreements up on their website (See # 13) that you can use for a start.

3- Uncle Stu sez - *"So you wanna do WFU in a pocket sized area with no agreements for private or other lands within your proposed MMA?"*

Not a good idea folks, especially without a lot of experience under your belt. If you've got small areas and really want to do WFU: unless it's surrounded by rock or desert - you'd better have a pretty much bomb-proof preset Maximum Management Area (MMA) boundaries and good Management Action Points (MAPs) - maybe an AMR strategy of confine/contain with an aggressive prescribed fire program is best. Remember bigger is better, if it isn't at least 10,000 acres – you'd better reconsider. Think big – the "Mega MMA" in Idaho and Montana in 2005 was 4.3 million acres and included 5 forests in 2 regions (Remember – big doesn't mean that it'll all burn – it's just the boundaries of the sand box that you're playing in).

For small, less than 10,000 acre, WFU areas (if you really insist):

- A. A defensible MMA should be established, with **no** non-Agency lands that are not covered by a pre-signed agreement included within the MMA.
- B. MAPs should be pre-developed to identify mitigation actions needed to keep the fire within the MMA and to protect sensitive resources within the MMA.
- C. In small approved areas outside of Wilderness or roadless areas (and for that matter in small Wilderness or WSAs), WFUs are manageable in very small areas if you have the people and the preplanning to manage the event. Remember that a WFU can have as aggressive management as any Wildland Fire. Burning out along road systems is appropriate as long as you have established management action points and your actions are based on some type of fire behavior spread predictions. There can be a fine line between the appearance of WFU and Prescribed Fire. You must not cross this line and only you in your heart of hearts will know where that line is.

4- Uncle Stu sez - *Communications and education are very important prior to startin' your WFU program- "I been on incidents where the local fire chief didn't know what or where we doing it, and none of the ranchers, adjacent landowners (fed), or special use permittees did neither. Even the resource specialists were in the dark". Talk about political fallouts - no wonder it was converted to suppression - if the locals and employees don't know where or why, it's too late to expect a FIO to come in cold and do the 'splaining and make everything purty"*

Develop a comprehensive Communications/Outreach plan that includes the following:

- A. Internal communications plan for Agency employees.
- B. External communications plan for cooperators which include other federal agencies as well as state, county and local.
- C. External communications plan for the general public.
- D. External communications plan for potentially affected landowners.

Make sure that this is not a plan that gathers dust on the shelf – it has to be used not only when you're starting out, but annually, pre-fire season, and also during an incident.

SELL THE PROGRAM!

Selling a WFU program is very different than selling your everyday suppression/prevention programs. Those have been sold by Smokey Bear and his cohorts for years. You need to be more inventive and flexible. You need to work the ecology of fire, the philosophy of "it's the right thing to do" and intermix firefighter safety and cost into your message. Wildland Fire Use education needs to be a year long process not just when there is smoke in the air. One of your first resource orders should be for an Information Officer (FIO2/1) with experience with Wildland Fire Use.

The good news is that there's a large (and growing) segment of the public (and landowners too) that don't need a lot of selling and see the benefits of it. These folks aren't necessarily urban folks. There are a lot of ranchers and rural folks out there that will support it, if you approach it the right way. Folks in Moffitt and Rio Blanco counties in Colorado (not exactly the hotbed of liberalism) support the WFU program there. And Uncle Stu's talked to ranchers and their lawyers that would like to see it happen. Even if they're looking at making more forage for livestock – that's OK, it's a basis to work off of and common ground.

5- Uncle Stu sez - *"You gotta let your fire folks know where and when WFU is an option. Gotta get them maps and let them know in the AM briefing if or where WFU is to be considered today. Kinda like:*

"We got ERC' of 85% today and no other fires so WFU is allowed in XYZ areas today".

Or, "Gez folks, our ERCs are runnin' at 99% we got 15 IA's and regional planning level is 5 - so no WFU today."

Unnerstand? You know - gotta set some ground rules first."

Pre-season or as a Standard Operating Procedure, develop appropriate decision making criteria for use in filling out the Decision Criteria Checklist. These **May** include some or all of the following:

- A. Energy Release Component (ERC) cutoff at which no additional fires will be considered for WFU.
- B. Number of current ignitions that the unit is currently managing under any AMR strategy.
- C. Local draw-down of fire management resources or Planning Level.
- D. Regional draw-down of resources or Planning Level.
- E. National draw-down of resources or Planning Level.
- F. Any other measurable criterion (KBDI is a good one to consider) that the unit decides is/are applicable.
- G. Protocol established to inform initial attack fire resources and resources staff of the AMR options for FMUs based on A-F above.**

Remember a Complexity Analysis is required before engagement on any fire and in approved areas for Wildland Fire Use a Decision Criteria Checklist must be completed before any action is taken in order to determine the Approved Response Action. A justification for suppression response is required in areas approved for WFU. This is a major change in mind set for most of us old firefighters.

6- Uncle Stu sez – “You gotta train up your folks - just 'cause you can order a FUM2, an LTAN and a Fire Use Module don't mean that you're gonna get them - others have the same desires and them that calls first gets 'em. Gotta get some locals to do non-complex WFU - what happens if you considered suppression the same way - oh, no ICT5/4 or engines, aah what the heck - order 'em in, it ain't no problem. Everbodies just waitin' to hep po' little us.”

Preparedness means training your folks and planning out things in advance. Pre-season mock-ups and dry runs work well for the practice part.

Develop a training plan to establish priorities and training needs for the following positions:

- A. Line Officer and Acting training – By policy - if they're not trained it's a no-go. The required class is fire Management Leadership.
- B. Resource Advisor Training. Locally given agency specific classes.
- C. Fire Use Manager, Type 1 and 2. (FUM2 and FUM1) The class required is: S-580.
- D. Fire Effects Monitor (FEMO) Requirements are: FFT2, S-290 and completion of a Taskbook.
- E. Fire Behavior positions with the objective of training employees up to the level of technical specialist for FARSITE or Rare Event Risk Assessment Process (RERAP) and/or Long Term Analyst (LTAN). The suggested/required classes are: S-490, S-491, S-492, S-492 and S-590. Yes, you can share these positions between units. This will be your most difficult position to fill and retain. You need to target as many people as you can for these positions.

7- Uncle Stu sez – “I hear all the time from locals that - Data, I don't need no stinkin' data, I've been around long enough to know what's gonna happen and where everthin' is.” Sorry folks, even if you're affectionately referred to as “older'n dirt” and have spent your whole life in one place, chances are you still don't know everthin. An' if you do, what happens if you retire on that big ol' govt pension or aren't around when stuff happens – gonna AD until you die?

Good data = Good Planning = Ready. Poor planning means poor performance Things are getting more complex every day. **You need to review the Pre-Planning Data Needs in Da' Appendix** and pull that information together for your normal fire job as well as for those times when stuff happens. (Hint – does any of this look familiar from your Fire Planning FPA exercise?)

Do not let the long list of data gathering in Da' Appendix scare you away. Remember every adventure begins with a first step. Start with one small step and just keep walking, your data base will grow with time and experience. One person may go faster but many people working together will go farther.

Remember; Update, Update, Update. Old data isn't going to do anybody any good. The WUI continues to expand, folks are itching to live in the forest, what was untouched a few years ago may now be sprinkled with summer cabins just hiding in the trees.

Uncle Stu also hears – Many complaints about LANDFIRE and FARSITE but...

Everyone (well almost all in the West) now has LANDFIRE data available. We all agree that the data are far from perfect, but the data layers do cross agency boundaries and are basically consistent. Rather than continue to complain about how bad LANDFIRE data sets are, we need to figure out how to make them work for each of our areas. If you can, evaluate the data at the FPU level and determine what changes need to be made- particularly in areas that have had some type of disturbance (fire, fuel treatment, bugs, etc) since 2000. Even if no one on the local unit has the time or expertise to make those changes, note what changes need to be made so an incoming LTAN/FBAN/FSPro Analyst/ technical specialist could use that information when doing fire behavior modeling and long term projections.

8. Uncle Stu sez – *“Anything ya do in suppression, ya can do in WFU. WFU don’t always mean standing ‘round with yur finger up yur nose monitorin’ stuff. Diggin’ line, firing out, using the heliochopper, and air tankers is all part of managing the fire. Heck Uncle Stu’s used a bull dozer towin’ a roller crusher before, had 200+ folks and 4 heliochoppers workin’ the line, and on one fire he had 4 air tankers in the air at one time.*

There are no policy limitations on the type of resources to be used or the jobs that they can do. Use the appropriate tool (resource) for the job that needs to be done based on your plan.

9. Uncle Stu hears - *“Management Action Points (MAP), they’re jest lines on a map, jest slap ‘em down on the map and we’ll figure out what to do when the fire gets there.”*

Well it’s kind of right. They are lines on a map, but there are a couple of types and a lot of thought should go into them before you draw them.

The types are:

A. Spatial. This is an actual line or point on the ground that if the fire approaches or hits this line, then something needs to be done. **Ex:** If the fire approaches the ridgeline north of Aunt Suzie Creek then initiate structure protection of Uncle Stu’s cabin.

B. Temporal or Conditional. These lines are not tied to a geographic feature, but are a combination of conditions, that if met, an action needs to take place. These conditions may be related to weather, seasonal dates. Energy Release Component (ERC), smoke conditions, fuel moistures, etc. **Ex:** If air quality limits are exceeded for more than two consecutive days, the fire will be lined to stop forward rate of spread and reduce smoke emissions.

A Management Action Point is where an action needs to be taken (duh). But it does not mean that you have to physically do something, it can also be a decision point. **Ex:** If the fire approaches the ridgeline north of Aunt Suzie Creek, the Unit needs to evaluate potential trail closures up Boondock Creek.

MAPs need to be far enough out from the value(s) at risk, to give the implementers of the action adequate time to actually get the job done, based on travel times, work time etc. Often ordering of resources and/or supplies also needs to occur – look at the need and place the MAP far enough out to address these needs (sometimes several days out). This may entail adding a MAP to order what you need, then following that up with another MAP to actually implement the action.

MAPs can also have different levels of response based on conditions. You may have a totally different response if the fire gets to a MAP during the middle of fire season, then you would after the rains begin in late summer/early fall. **Ex:** If the fire reaches the ridgeline north of Aunt Suzie Creek before August 15, initiate structure protection of Uncle Stu's cabin. If the fire reaches the ridgeline after August 15, review the long range weather forecast and evaluate the need for structure protection at Uncle Stu's cabin.

You can also tie multiple actions to a single MAP. This decreases the need to clutter the map with a lot of lines and also ensures that things don't fall through the cracks when things happen. And things will happen.

10. Uncle Stu sez – *“Da knuckle draggers (Ops) and da' fire behavior geeks need to be tied together at da' hip. Which means that da' geeks gotta get to the field to see what the fire's doin' and not jest look at da' computer screen.*

In WFU and long term incidents, fire behavior plays an even more important role than in “normal” short term fire suppression incidents. Fire behavior will give you the following essentials in planning and implementing:

- A. Their runs will help determine where your Management Action Points will be located (They have to be far enough out to be able to protect your values at risk. See # 9).
- B. Their runs will help you prioritize actions based on the probability of the fire getting to a specific spot in time.
- C. When you are doing point protection or other indirect mitigation actions – you need to know when the fire is going to get there so you can safely deploy your forces.

Uncle Stu remembers – *Being on a WFU when some visitors from Down-Under showed up to see how we did our job. They'd jest come from a Type 1 fire and their most tellin' comment was “ gee – you folks base everthin' on fire behavior – it makes sense to us”.*

11- Uncle Stu hears – *“LTANs, they's a pretty useless group. I already know what the fire's gonna do and alls they gives me is S*#@ that I can't unnerstand anyway. Alls it is is fancy computer stuff and we knows it's all a guess anyway.”*

Sorry folks – see data needs above. On a positive note a good LTAN will use your “older'n dirt” local knowledge to help calibrate stuff and make it as accurate as possible. Remember that the information you get will be a model and all models are inherently inaccurate and only as good as the information that goes into them. Everything's based on data and analysis – it may not be a 100 % correct, but it'll give you some very valuable insight and assist in the decision making process.

12 - Uncle Stu sez – *“Ya don't always get the friendly, flickering flames – sometimes it's a screamin' crown fire. Ya better be prepared for it – it takes gumption to do WFU – it ain't for the faint of heart. An ol' WFU ops chief (yep, there's older ones than Uncle Stu) told me once that WFU is 99% sheer boredom and 1% sheer terror. Been there, done that. – It's true. You ain't lived until you take your boss on a flight when the fire's rippin' across 1,400 acres of private land and feel the tension build up in the back of the ship. Yah, we had agreements in place, but they expected the friendly flickering flames – didn't get it. – just 40 mph winds for 5 hours.*

Fire conditions change as the weather and season does. So what starts out as something benign can (and probably will) change into a whole different critter. You have to plan on worst case fire behavior and communicate it to others. You need and should expect to have some stand replacement fire. There is no good or bad fire, it is all just fire. No surprises please – it's bad for the ole heart. Look at your weather history to get an idea of how many significant wind events your area has in a fire season (or in the part you're looking at). It helps with your planning and communications.

13- Uncle Stu sez – *“So you're lost and don't know where to go. Boy, do I got a deal for you! Jest find the oldest, grayest, most WFU experienced person you know and start askin' questions and askin' for contacts. If nothin' else you'll get some great stories (only believe 1/4 of'em).”*

Not only is there “official” training, but there's an extensive WFU Underground that you can tap into. There are a lot of folks that are either too tied down by their normal jobs, or are burned out by our expanding fire seasons. It's surprising who you can find for the occasional assignment (LTANS, FUM1/2s, etc) or for good advice on planning and implementing a WFU program. You've got to start networking; S-580 is a good place to start. Don't try to do it by yourself – re-inventing the wheel is not a labor of love – it's downright masochistic and wastes lots of time and money. Also, if you **surround yourself with the best you have a better chance at success.**

Some good websites are:

The Wildland Fire Lessons Learned Center @ <http://www.wildfirelessons.net/Home.aspx>

Fire Research & Management Exchange System (FRAMES) @ <http://frames.nbio.gov/portal/server.pt?open=512&objID=205&PageID=0&cached=true&mode=2>

MyFireCommunity @ <http://www.myfirecommunity.net/>

Rocky Mountain Coordination Group, Fuels and Fire Use Committee @ <http://www.wy.blm.gov/fireuse/>

14. Uncle Stu sez – *“Now ya got a live'un, whadda yah gonna do?”*

Follow your plan is a good place to start. Remember all that pre-planning? Now is when it pays off.

- 1- Have your local IA forces get to the fire and do a size up Is it a WFU candidate or not? If it's not, suppress it using AMR. If it is a candidate then:
- 2- Do the Strategic Fire Size-Up, the Decision Criteria Checklist, and Relative Risk Assessment/Planning Needs Assessment Chart and see if it's a go. If its not, manage it using AMR. If it is a go then:
- 3- See where the Planning Needs Assessment falls and plan your actions from there. Hint – if it's calling for a Stage III and a FUM1 or if it's borderline – consider calling in a FUMT, unless you're really good, and experienced at these things (but then this guide is for beginners).
***Get your re-validation schedule set up with your agency administrator now.**
- 4- Do the Stage I (within 8 hours of confirmed fire detection and Strategic Fire Size-Up) using the current information and your plan (Remember Uncle Stu sez #1? It pays off now). Remember you are implementing actions on the ground, (even if it's just monitoring). Get your key ID team members together – start working and planning.

Uncle Stu sez – “If’n yur fuel type is p-j, sagebrush/grass or sumthin’ else real flammable - yu’d better jes’ keep on goin’ to Stage II right now – cause yur gonna need it., lessen’ it’s in a rock pile with NO change of getting’ out.”

- 5- When your Planning Needs Assessment says to go to Stage II – go. Keep everyone in the loop (See #4 above if you’re in flammable fuel types). **DO NOT let the Planning Needs Assessment Chart stop you from moving up into the next higher WFIP Stage.** Be proactive, stay ahead of the game. Playing catch up with a WFU will only get you burned (See # 16 for more info). If you think the fire’s going there – start working on the next one now.

NOTE: Prepare a **DRAFT MMA.** You need to know where you want the fire to go. The public will also want to know that this is not an open ended event; that there are some limits that are being looked at but these areas have not been finalized at this time. Make sure your MAPs are defensible and your proposed MMA is big enough. When you’re preparing your Stage II, do as much prep work on your Stage III as you can.

- 6- So you’re now at Stage III and you’re going to call in a FUMT? Good on yah. It’s always better to be safe than sorry, especially when you’re just starting out.

Do not be intimidated by Stage III. It is better to be ahead of the game then trying to catch up. A skeleton Stage III or reworking your Stage II to make it a Stage II on steroids is better then nothing and will help the team understand your thought process and direction you want to see the fire go.

What to do and what to expect –

- A. FUMTs are short Type 2 teams and heavily tech dependent.
- B. Locate them in your office or as close to it as possible – it will pay big dividends in communications, working relationships and effectiveness. They’re not like a “traditional” IMT that sets up camp miles away and you see them at the briefing. You’ll see the FUMT folks a lot more. Because of the size of the team and the tasks that they do – they’re much more a part of your extended staff than you’re used to.
- C. Give them a thorough briefing – make expectations know off the bat. There’s nothing more frustrating for both parties than leaving out/missing important information.
- D. Data and more data. The FUMT needs data (see Uncle Stu Sez # 7. Yes, they are a techie group. And they will need good internet access.
- F. **STAY INVOLVED.**

15- Uncle Stu sez – “Know what you’re getting’ into”.

These things can last all summer (3-4 months) if they’re in the trees (and 3+ weeks in the Pinyon-Juniper-surprise!) Make sure your line officer and publics know that too. “When is this puppy going end?” is a very commonly heard question. You need to educate your line officer and everyone else on this simple fact. There will be a strain on the local office due to other critical day-to-day operations (the world doesn’t stop for a WFU event). Uncle Stu’s been back to the same place a couple of times in the same year. **ENDURANCE** is the key for local folks.

16- Uncle Stu sez – “Don’t get behind the ol’ powercurve. If yur goin’ day to day – yur “officially” way behind.

Bad things can (**and will**) happen if you’re not on top of things.

- 1- You compromise firefighter and public safety, or
- 2- You burn down stuff you didn’t mean to, or
- 3- You get embarrassed when that fire you’ve haven’t checked on in a couple of days, decides to rip off a few miles of crown fire run in an afternoon.
- 4- You catch my drift?

Do a really good thorough job on your Stage I and Stage II WFIPs (or if you’re doing a long term suppression fire – your short term implementation plan). After all, it’s what you’re using to manage the fire. Be complete and specific; lay everything out (esp. your values at risk!!). Don’t be cryptic and gloss over things, just because you know them. Someone else may end up managing this WFU and they can’t read your mind. **Uncle Stu remembers** – “going into a WFU and the Stage II was sketchy – guess what - a couple of days later the locals filled us in on a bunch more values at risk and wanted the fire kept away from’em. By that time the fire had blown past some good containment points an’ ol’ Uncle Stu had to spend a bucket full o’ dollars on aviation and crews to yard it back in – sompin he could have done much cheaper if’n he’d only known.

See above about lasting all summer – people get tired, things (like other fires) happen. It’s very easy to let something drop and miss some very important trigger (or Management Action) points and then watch your “lil ol” fire go right across the ridgetop you were supposed to hold it at. Stay on top of the game – assign someone the responsibility and make sure they keep their focus.

For those complex incidents that exceed your local capabilities, don’t hesitate to call in a Fire Use Management Team (FUMT). They’re relatively cheap (10 people) and it’s their job to keep on top of things. They can also help you out in training and hand-holding of Agency Administrators.

Local folks need to keep track of their non-fire personnel, like trail crews, recreation crews, volunteers, etc that may be in the fire area doing their normal jobs. Make sure the local folks know the drill about WFU (Remember Uncle Stu sez #4?). Make sure the team knows their whereabouts. It’s very important to have a safety/evacuation plan worked out for these folks.

Outfitter and guides and permittees are a challenge. They don’t like nomex and think radios make good weights for fishing. **You, as the local**, need to stay on top of where they are and what they’re doing and make sure that the team managing the fire knows this. It’s very important to have a safety/evacuation plan worked out for these folks. Closing an area can be a good idea for those folks who just can’t get enough of the wilderness experience.

Other Helpful Hints:

Follow the “rules of the game”. The rules are there to help you survive. Making up the rules as you go is not an option.

You **will** loose something of value sooner or later. You can’t save everything, every time. Just do your best.

Finally, you got to trust the folks you’re working with and yourself.

17. Uncle Stu sez – *“Convertin’ a WFU to suppression is no big shucks” It’s just changin’ strategies on a fire and getting the resources needed to accomplish the job.”*

Saving the hardest for the last. Theoretically, it should be no more difficult to convert a WFU incident to another type of AMR, than it is to change strategies on a suppression oriented incident, or to call in an IMT when a fire exceeds local capabilities.

However, because WFU is still the new kid on the block, with more perceived risk than suppression, there remains the stigma of conversion. If you can alter the implementation procedures laid out in your WFIP (after all it is a living document) to meet new management goals and objectives, go ahead and do that. But for those times when you can’t safely or effectively do that, convert it, get the job done, and go home.

You will have second thoughts, and a multitude of what ifs, and some people may question the WFU decision in the first place. But if you have done the up front communications with local staffs and public, if you have a good plan, followed the plan and changed strategies when the plan said to – you should be able to withstand the additional scrutiny.

See #12 – This isn’t for the faint of heart or for the risk adverse.

Uncle Stu's Gotta Read Bibliography for Fire Stuff

Da books and articles below are Uncle Stu's required readin' list (jest like school), its politiks, history, restoration, ecology and social science - yah need to know all of'em ta do yur job.

Arno, Stephen E., Fielder, Carl E. Mimicking Natures Fire: restoring fire-prone forests in the West. Island Press. 2005.

Daniel, Terry C., et.al. Eds. People, Fire and Forests: a synthesis of wildfire social science. Oregon State University Press. 2007.

Kennedy, Roger C. Wildfire and Americans: how to save lives, property, and your tax dollars. Hill and Wang. 2006.

Mutch, Robert W. Wildland Fire Use: Incentives and Disincentives.
[www.wilderness.net/toolboxes/documents/fire/Wildland_Fire_Use--Incentives_and_Disincentives.](http://www.wilderness.net/toolboxes/documents/fire/Wildland_Fire_Use--Incentives_and_Disincentives)
October 19, 2007.

Pyne, Stephen J. Fire in America: a cultural history of wildland and rural fire. University of Washington Press. 1997

USDA Forest Service. Wildland Fire Management Efficiencies, Implementation Guidelines. July 2007.

Wildfire Lessons Learned Center. Initial Impressions Report Wildland Fire Use (final). July 2005.

Remember - If Wildland Fire Use Was Easy, They Would Call it Suppression!

Da' Appendix

Pre-Planning Data Needs – Put 'em on an external hard drive (they're cheap) Compliments of our NPS buddies – Uncle Stu stole it.

+---Fire_Behavior_Files

- | +---Fire_Weather
 - | | +---FFP_mdb
 - | | +---RAWS_map
 - | | +---Wind_roses
 - | | \---Wind_Vector_Maps

- | +---Fuels_FARSITE
 - | | +---documentation
 - | | | anderson_aids_fm_int_gtr122.pdf
 - | | | CompareModelsFour.xls
 - | | | NewFuelModels.chm
 - | | | ScottBurgan2005-GTR-153.pdf
 - | | +---FARSITE
 - | | | \---UTM_z__nad_
 - | | | | +---documentation
 - | | | | +---LCP_file
 - | | | | \---wind_weather_files
 - | | | | | \---gridded_winds
 - | | | \---fuels_grid

- | +---Fuel_Moisture_database

- | +---Greenness_images

- | \---RERAP_Term_Files

+---Fire_History

- | +---burn_severity
- | +---fire_history_points
- | +---fire_history_polygons
- | \---progression_maps

+---GIS_data

- | +---Grid
 - | | +---DEM
 - | | +---Fuels
 - | | \---Hillshade
- | +---Images
 - | | +---DOQs
 - | | +---DRGs
 - | | | \---TOPO_MrSid
 - | | \---Plot Photos
- | \---Vector
 - | | +---Aviation_related
 - | | | +---flight_hazards
 - | | | +---helispots
 - | | \---potential_dipsites

- | +---Boundaries
 - | +---administrative
 - | +---Land Ownership
 - | +---FPU's
 - | \---management
 - | \---FMUs
 - | \---Wilderness
 - | \---WFU zone
 - | \---FMUs
- | +---Hydrology
 - | +---other_water_sources
 - | +---ponds_lakes
 - | \---rivers_streams
- | +---Transportation
 - | +---Roads
 - | \---Trails
- | \---Values_to_be_protected
 - | +---cultural
 - | +---natural
 - | +---powerlines
 - | +---structures

+---Maps

- | ---Land Ownership (within and around Unit)
- | ---Management Areas (Wilderness, WFU, NRAs, WSAs, etc.)
- | ---Values to be protected (structures, WUI, cultural, natural, political...)
- | ---Fire History
- | ---Water sources,
- | ---helispots, aviation hazard map...
- | ---Weather station map (with ID and elevation)

+---Past Fire Documentation packages

- | +---BAER_reports
- | +---Suppression
- | \---WFU

+---Planning documents

- | +---Communication_plan
- | +---Evacuation_plan
- | +---Fire Management Plan (and recent updates)
- | +---Smoke_management_plan
- | +---Structure_assessment
- | +---Structure_defense_plan
- | +---WFIP_examples_templates
 - | \---pre-planned_MMAs
- | \---WFSAs_examples_templates