Modification of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Guidance

Communication Plan

Final

July 18, 2008

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Introduction
This plan outlines a communication strategy for implementing modifications to the **"**Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003)."

A task group was recently chartered by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) to consider modifying federal wildland fire policy implementation to permit greater flexibility and latitude in using a variety of response strategies on federal lands commensurate with:
- public and firefighter safety;
- current and predicted risk;
- values to be protected;
- availability of management resources; and
- land management objectives.

The task group approached this effort to address needed changes in the current policy guidance that restrict application of the full range of response options to unplanned wildland fires on federal lands in three phases.
- Phase One examined existing policy implementation guidance and provided recommendations on changes and/or modifications that can be made by the 2008 fire season.
- Phase Two expands the knowledge and understanding of the implementation and assessment process for the full range of response to unplanned wildland fire in 2009.
- Phase Three will implement the findings of the human-caused ignition feasibility study.

This communication plan focuses on the decisions and outcomes from Phase One with the goal of providing consistent language and understanding of the proposed modifications across internal and external audiences and partners. It will be updated as additional phases and findings are completed over the next several months.

Background
In November 2006, the USDA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that the U.S. Forest Service could strengthen the cost-effectiveness of its fire fighting without sacrificing safety by increasing wildland fire use to reduce hazardous accumulations of forest fuels. This was further expanded to include the DOI bureaus when GAO testimony on "Wildland Fire Management – A Cohesive Strategy and Clear Cost-Containment Goals Are Needed for Federal Agencies to Manage Wildland Fire Activities Effectively" was made before the Subcommittee on National Parks, Forests and Public Lands, Committee on Natural Resources, House of Representatives, June 2007.

Current interagency policy guidance established in 2003 may have unnecessarily narrowed the interpretation of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy and restricted the application of a full spectrum of suppression and management strategies commensurate with risk, public and firefighter safety, values to be protected, and land management objectives. To address this problem, a task group was assigned by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) to develop recommendations and timeframes for a phased modification of the original guidance "Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003)."

Proposed modifications to the interagency implementation strategy were presented to the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) in February. Subsequently, the Fire Executive

Council (FEC), after consultation with partners, concurred with the proposed modification and recommended that WFLC approve and allow agencies to proceed with implementation this summer on selected pilot units. On March 24, 2008 the WFLC approved the modification and implementation plan contingent upon favorable counsel review (WFLC Briefing Paper: Attorney's Review of Proposed Modified Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy: June 25, 2008).

The proposed modifications or "revised direction" will be implemented on a limited number of field units this summer and then incorporated into revised "Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy" expected to be issued in November 2008.

For the units not selected as pilot sites for the new guidance, existing guidance will continue to be applied this calendar year. Experience gained in the select pilot units will be used to draft guidance for national application in 2009.

<u>WFLC Implementation Guide Modifications Decisions</u>
The following depicts:
> 1) The current policy direction contained in the **"**Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003)"; and
> 2) The proposed modified guidance to be implemented within select "pilot" units during 2008.

The language below is verbatim from the WFLC memo of March 24, 2008; it has been re-written in the recommended communications tools, found later in this plan, for better public understanding.

Current Direction: 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.

- **Revised Direction:** Wildland fires can be managed for one or more objective(s) based on the Land and Resource Management Plan and Fire Management Plan direction.

Current Direction: Once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefit objectives.

- **Revised Direction:** When two or more wildland fires burn together they will be handled as a single wildland fire and may be managed for one or more objectives based on the Land and Resource Management Plan direction as an event moves across the landscape and fuels and weather conditions change.

Current Direction: The Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) 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. Wildland fire use is the result of a natural event. The Land and 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.

- **Revised Direction:** Every wildland fire will be assessed following a decision support process that examines the full range of responses. The system currently being developed and prototyped is known as Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).

Current Direction: 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.

- **Revised Direction:** Once a prescribed fire is no longer meeting those resources objectives stated specifically in the prescribed fire plan or project level NEPA and is declared a wildfire it receives the same reassessment and selection of response objectives as any other wildfire event given the location, current conditions (fuels, weather, etc) and identified management considerations.

Under the auspices of the "revised direction," the Forest Service and the DOI agencies will work in concert with one another to select prototype field units, implement interim guidance, conduct training and orientation, and develop a communication strategy by the summer of 2008. State air quality regulations were acknowledged by the NWCG task group as an area where each field unit would need to plan with their local air regulatory agency in advance for the implementation of the interim guidance.

Implementation Strategy and Schedule

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.

Phase 1 - (Timeframe: 6 Months / June – November)

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:** Proposed modifications to "Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003)." Done - WFLC Memo date 5/12/08.

- **Step 2:** Select prototype units to test proposed modifications this summer under interim guidance that will be approved by FEC at their June 25 meeting. The preliminary list of pilot units for the testing of Modified Federal Fire Policy Implementation is listed below. Units are described by Geographic Area as defined in the National Interagency Mobilization Guide. Done – WFLC Briefing date 6/25/08

- **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, to uncover issues and for use this summer. A sample of initial issues discussed includes:
  - ESR/BAER applicability
  - Use of accounting codes
  - How will acres burned be reported "protection" vs. "benefit"?

- How will smoke/air quality regulators look at these fires and their emissions?
- Fireline qualifications

Done – WFLC Briefing date 6/25/08.

- **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. Reports from the 2008 field trail will be completed by October 7, 2008. The 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 rollup.

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

Phase 2 - (Timeframe: 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 and prescribed fire. Develop and implement training and Phase 2 Communication Plan. Begin examination of feasibility of allowing unauthorized human ignitions to achieve resource objectives.

Phase 3 - (Timeframe: 12-18 Months after Phase 2 Completion)
Implement the findings of the humans-caused ignitions feasibility study. Develop and implement Phase 3 Communications Plan.

List Of Pilot Units for Modified Federal Fire Policy Implementation Testing
Below are the field units selected as pilot sites where the modified guidance will be implemented and tested this summer. Recognizing that some pilot units may go through fire season without having fires it is appropriate that agencies be able to add additional pilots, subject to agency director approval, so that modifications are fully tested. The NWCG task group working on the modified implementation policy will be available to introduce the intent and direction and assist any of the pilots with implementation this summer. The pilot units currently approved are:

Pacific 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, and Gunnison National Forests) (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-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain Prairie Region, Browns 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 Dwellings 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-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Region: 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
State of Alaska

Any revisions and updates to the list will be posted on the Federal Wildland Fire Policy web page at: http://www.nifc.gov/fire_policy/

Communication Plan Goals/Objectives

- Enhance understanding among external audiences of the proposed modifications to the Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

- Communicate these changes and provide information to unit and Incident Management Team communicators, fire managers and agency administrators about the modified guidance so they are able to convey consistent messages to affected audience.

- Focus on and assist pilot units with communication tools and guidance in order for them to develop and build capacity to effectively convey consistent information, messages, and understanding to their local key publics, partners, and employees.

Key Audience

- Agency Line Officers
- Public Affairs Officers for the agencies and stakeholders
- Agency Fire Management Officers
- Wildland Firefighters at Regional, State and Local Levels
- National and Area Incident Management Teams
- State Foresters
- Federal, State, Tribal and local/District Air Quality Regulators
- Tribal Partners
- Fire Planners
- Land and Resource Management Planners
- Safety Officers
- Incident Business Management Specialists
- Training Specialists
- County Commissioners
- Federal, State, and Local Elected Officials
- Local Fire Jurisdictions
- Public and Special Interest Groups

Key Messages

- The modifications to the implementation of current policy will increase safety for firefighters through less exposure on the fireline; increase the effectiveness of available resources by assigning them to identified values to be protected; and help reduce fuels and rejuvenate vegetation in pre-identified areas of unit fire plans.

- Modifications will allow for a full spectrum of management response to wildland fire on federal lands commensurate with public and firefighter safety, the current and predicted risk, values to be protected, and land management objectives.

- The Wildland Fire Leadership Council decisions only address modifications to policy implementation guidance and will only apply in select areas where local managers are willing and current Land and Resource Management Plan and Fire Management Plan direction allows.

- There will be no change in how the Federal Wildland Fire Policy is implemented in 2008 to units not selected to implement the proposed modifications on a pilot basis.

- Finalized guidance and a revised Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy are expected to be completed by January 2009. Implementing new policy will require that appropriate language is written into Land and Resource Management Plans and Fire Management Plans.

- There will be no immediate change in the response to human-caused fires. However, a study regarding human-caused ignitions and the feasibility of managing these fires to achieve resource objectives will begin in late 2008, with implementation of findings anticipated within two years.

Key Questions
1. Why is the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy being modified?

These decisions do not represent an actual change in policy, but rather modify existing guidance to allow more complete implementation of current policy. The modification allows fires to be managed for more than one objective and will encourage a full spectrum of fire management actions on federal lands, ranging from aggressive suppression to passive management commensurate with public and firefighter safety, the current and predicted risk, values to be protected and land management objectives.

In November 2006, the USDA Office of the Inspector General (OIG) found that the U.S. 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. To address this finding, an interagency task group comprised of fuels and fire management experts was assigned by National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) to develop recommendations and timeframes for a phased modification of the 2003 Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.

The interagency task group provided five decision points to modify policy direction for testing and evaluation in 2008. These five recommendations were adopted by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC).

2. What are the Wildland Fire Leadership Council's recommendations?

The Wildland Fire leadership Council approved the following decisions to be implemented only in select pilot areas during the 2008 fire season. The five decision points providing interagency direction for testing and evaluation include:

(1) Wildland fires can be managed for one or more objective(s) based on the Land and Resource Management Plan and Fire Management Plan direction.

(2) When two or more fires burn together they will be handled as a single wildland fire and may be managed for one or more objectives based on Land and Resource Management Plan and Fire Management Plan direction.

(3 & 4)[1] Every wildland fire will be assessed following a decision support process that examines the full range of responses. The system currently being prototyped is the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).

(5) Once a prescribed fire is no longer meeting objectives stated specifically in the prescribed fire plan or project-level NEPA and is declared a wildfire, it receives the same reassessment and choice of response strategies and tactics as any other wildfire.

3. What about the remainder of the 2003 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy?

Two clarification statements from the "Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003)" will be retained:

(1) The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is any specific action suitable to meet Fire Management Unit (FMU) objectives. Typically, the AMR ranges across a spectrum of tactical options (from monitoring to intensive management actions). The AMR is developed by using FMU strategies and objectives identified in the Fire Management Plan.

(2) Human caused wildland fires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.

4. What is the implementation timeframe?

The WFLC decision will be implemented during the 2008 fire season on selected pilot field units. Approximately three to five pilot units per agency will be available to work with the task group and other specialist in the event they should have a wildland fire that meets the proposed criteria for proposed changes in policy implementation.

5. What goals will be achieved with modifying the Federal Wildland Fire Policy Implementation?

The ultimate goal for modifying the way federal wildland fire policy is understood and implemented is to allow for a full spectrum of management response to wildland fire on federal lands based on the considerations of public and firefighter safety, the current and predicted risk, values to be protected, and land management objectives. By allowing more flexibility, fire managers can strengthen the effectiveness of agency firefighting resources without sacrificing public and firefighter safety.

6. How will this affect fire suppression response this summer?

There will be no effect to fire suppression or wildland fire use response this summer on units other than those units which have volunteered to serve as a pilot test unit to implement the proposed modifications to the federal wildland fire policy. If successful, further national guidance will be issued in 2009.

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[1] Decision points 3 & 4 addressed the unique planning and implementation processes for wildfires and wildland fire use fires, these are known as the Wildland Fire Situation Assessment (WFSA) and Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP), respectively, and will be retained as fully functional processes until WFDSS is fully tested and approved as operational and implemented for all units with wildland fire potential.

7. What units have been selected that will pilot test the adopted modifications this summer?

The list of pilot units for the testing of modified Federal Fire Policy implementation has been identified. There is a cross representation of units amongst the five federal land management agencies primarily within the western United States. Final selection of the prototype units to test the proposed modifications was reviewed by the WFLC at their June 25 meeting.

8. How were pilot units selected?

The field pilot units selected had to address (all or in part) the following criteria:
- Approved land management plan and fire management plan allowing wildland fire use;
- Experience with Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) and Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) processes;
- Availability or potential to have one or more large fire suppression events, complex wildland fire events, or long duration suppression events requiring long-term operational plan completion;
- Active initial attack program of moderate or high complexity;
- Willingness of the Agency Administrator and Fire Staff to be involved in the evaluation process;
- Interagency component (such as in an interagency dispatch area) specifically representing Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service, Forest Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs and/or the National Park Service areas; and
- Ability to obtain geo-spatial data files to run the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).

9. What is the planned implementation steps and schedule?

The task group approached this effort to address barriers in the current policy guidance that restrict application of the full range of response options to unplanned wildland fires on federal lands in three phases.
- **Phase One** examined existing policy guidance and provided recommendations on changes and/or modifications that can be made by the 2008 fire season.
- **Phase Two** expands the knowledge and understanding of the implementation and assessment process for the full range of response to unplanned wildland fire in 2009.
- **Phase Three** will implement the findings of the human caused ignition feasibility study.

The success of implementing the communication strategy is contingent on developing interagency local unit action plans to initiate local contacts and briefings of affected audiences. Local units should work with their regional and/or state communications and public affairs contacts to facilitate this effort. The interagency public affairs group at NIFC is available to assist local and regional/state units in this effort.

10. What will the role of local Government fire agencies be?

Everyone must recognize that no one entity can do it all alone and our collective wildfire response efficiency is highly dependent on the readiness of state and local responders. Their participation in this effort of applying policy implementation changes is vital to the success of

this change especially considering the efficacy of state and local departments to contact and interface with local residents and landowners. Interaction and communication to state and local departments about these events should occur early and often and be consistent with local agreement(s).

Action Plan
The action plan identifies audiences, messages, tools, assigned to and timeline. The communication plan will be updated as other modifications and/or final decisions are approved and adopted.

Audience	Messages	Tools	Assigned to	Timeline
National				
▪ FS, BLM, FWS, NPS, and BIA Line Officers on the selected pilot units	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages	Agency Public Affairs contacts at NIFC or WO level	July 2008
▪ State Foresters within those states with selected pilot units.	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages	Agency Regional/State Fire Directors and their Fire Management Officers, as assigned	July 2008
▪ IAFC - Provide outreach and coordination to those local government fire agencies that are contiguous to pilot units.	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages	AMR Task Group	July 2008
▪ FS, BLM, FWS, NPS and BIA Fire Directors within those states and regions with selected pilot units	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages	AMR Task Group	July 2008

Audience	Messages	Tools	Assigned to	Timeline
▪ National Incident Management Teams and NIMO Teams	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages ▪ Maybe a VTC or Conf call with the communicators? ▪ Consistent proposed language for InciWeb for those units. ▪ Utilize National IMT PIO contact list.	NIFC External Affairs	July 2008
Regional				
▪ FS, BLM, FWS, NPS and BIA fire directors	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages	Agency Fire Directors at NIFC	July 2008
▪ FS, BLM, FWS, NPS and BIA fire staff	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages	Agency Regional Fire Directors	July 2008
▪ Local Air Quality Regulatory Officials (federal, state and local/district)	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages ▪ Briefings/Meetings ▪ Permit and consultation expectations per previous WFU and new pilot implementation modifications	Agency Regional Fire Directors and their Fire Management Officers, as assigned	July 2008

Audience	Messages	Tools	Assigned to	Timeline
Local				
▪ FS, BLM, FWS, NPS and BIA pilot field units employees (fire and non-fire)	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages ▪ Briefings/Meetings ▪ Utilize My Fire Community for messaging.	Agency Regional Fire Directors with Regional Public Affairs staff	July 2008
▪ Local Jurisdiction Fire Chiefs	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages ▪ Briefings/Meetings	Agency local fire Staff with local and/or regional agency public affairs support	July 2008
▪ Local Elected Officials (federal, state and local)	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages ▪ Briefings/Meetings	Agency local fire Staff with local and/or regional agency public affairs support	July 2008
▪ Special Interest Groups (local and/or regional)	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages ▪ Briefings/Meetings	Agency regional and local fire Staff with regional and/or local agency public affairs support	July 2008
▪ Local Air Quality Regulatory Officials (federal, state and local/district)	▪ Federal wildland fire policy modifications approved by WFLC. ▪ Pilot test units selected for 2008 implementation. ▪ Clarification of 2003 interagency policy.	▪ Fact Sheet/Briefing Paper ▪ Frequently Asked Questions ▪ Key Messages ▪ Briefings/Meetings ▪ Permit and consultation expectations per previous WFU and new pilot implementation modifications	Agency local fire Staff with local and/or regional agency public affairs support	July 2008

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Modification of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Guidance
Key Messages for external and non-fire audiences

- Changing environmental conditions and increasing numbers of large fires requires more flexibility to use a wider variety of responses, both to increase public and firefighter safety and effectiveness.

- This summer, fire managers will test several "pilot" areas to use a range of strategies in response to a wildfire on federal lands, based on current and predicted risk, values to be protected, and land management objectives. For example, one part of a fire near homes would be suppressed while another part may be used to benefit the health of a natural area.

- The new approach is expected to increase safety for firefighters through less exposure on the fireline; increase effective use of available resources; and help reduce the hazardous accumulation of overgrown vegetation.

- If the tests in pilot areas are successful, official changes will be made to allow a full spectrum of responses in summer 2009 to all fires on federal lands, except for wildfires caused by human carelessness or arson.

- A study on human-caused fires and the feasibility of managing them under this new approach will begin in late 2008, with possible changes made within two years.

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Frequently Asked Questions

1. Why is the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy being modified?

The policy is not being modified, but rather implementation of the policy is being made more flexible, to allow a wider range of responses to wildfire in some test areas. This is because the USDA Office of the Inspector General found in 2006 that the U.S. Forest Service could improve cost-effectiveness without sacrificing safety by increasing the use of fire to reduce overgrown vegetation that could fuel future fires. The modifications being tested will allow a range of responses to a fire, from aggressive suppression to passive management depending on the current and predicted risk, values to be protected, and land management objectives.

2. What is the goal of making these changes?

The ultimate goal for modifying the way federal wildland fire policy is understood and implemented is to allow for a full spectrum of management response to any wildland fire on federal lands based on the considerations of public and firefighter safety, the current and predicted risk, values to be protected, and land management objectives. By allowing more flexibility, fire managers can strengthen the effectiveness of agency firefighting resources without sacrificing public and firefighter safety.

3. What are the changes being tested?

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC), which determines how fire policy is implemented in the United States, approved the following changes in the 2003 Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy for selected pilot areas during the 2008 fire season.
>   (1) There may be one or more goals when responding to a wildfire, depending on the Land and Resource Management Plan and Fire Management Plan for that area.
>
>   (2) When two or more fires burn together, they will be treated them as one fire with one of more goals as stated above.
>
>   (3 & 4) Every wildfire will be assessed using the same decision support process that examines the full range of responses. The system currently being tested for this purpose is called the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).
>
>   (5) Once a prescribed fire is no longer meeting goals stated in the prescribed fire plan or project-level NEPA, it will be declared a wildfire and assessed like any other wildfire, as stated above.

4. What about the remainder of the 2003 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy?

The WFLC decided to retain these statements:

(1) The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is any specific action suitable to meet Fire Management Unit (FMU) objectives. Typically, the AMR ranges across a spectrum of tactical options (from monitoring to intensive management actions). The AMR is developed by using FMU strategies and objectives identified in the Fire Management Plan.

(2) Human caused wildland fires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.

5. What is the implementation timeframe?

The WFLC decision will be implemented during the 2008 fire season on selected pilot field units. Three to five pilot units per agency will test changes should a naturally caused wildfire occur.

6. How will this affect fire suppression response this summer?

There will be no effect to fire suppression or wildland fire use response this summer on units that are not designated as pilots for this test. If this summer's test is successful, further national guidance will be issued in 2009 for all naturally caused fires on federal lands.

7. What pilot areas will test the modifications this summer?

There is a cross representation of areas among the five federal land management agencies primarily within the western United States. A complete list is attached.

8. How do the modifications affect Cost Containment and Accountable Cost Management Strategies?

Both Cost Containment and Accountable Cost Management focus on the financial crisis resulting from the phenomenal escalation of fire suppression cost over the last several years. The planned response to these cost issues target three areas; 1) improved decisions, 2) improved management actions, and 3) strengthened management controls. The modifications to implementation of fire policy fit in the "improved management actions" by expanding available strategies and tactics for consideration by allowing multiple objectives on a fire.

9. How will conflicts between the modifications and existing Interagency and Agency specific policy and guidance be handled?

During the development of the modifications the task group identified numerous issues and barriers in existing policies and guidance that prevent field units being able to full spectrum of response actions necessary to manage a wildfire or wildland fire use event for the duration of the event. These issues and barriers will be documented and responses written as interim guidance for the pilot and shared as part of the adaptive learning process during the test period.

Modification of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Guidance

Briefing Paper for internal agency audiences

For 2008, these modifications will apply and be implemented only in select pilot areas
Fuels and climate conditions, a continually expanding wildland-urban interface, and increasingly severe fire behavior are all factors contributing to an evolution in the way wildfires are managed. This trend has drawn increasing attention to Appropriate Management Response, and concurrently to the concept of managing a wildfire for more than one designated objective.

Although trends in tactics, such as point-protection techniques, and managing fire for multiple benefits are separate and distinct approaches, there has been some confusion and multiple interpretations in the field and across agencies regarding fire policy implementation. To provide clarification and direction, Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) has approved the following decisions, to be tested and evaluated in 2008 only in select pilot areas chosen among the five federal agencies, primarily in the western United States (see attached list).

1) Wildland fires can be managed for one or more objective(s) based on the Land/Resource Management Plan direction.
2) When two or more fires burn together they will be handled as a single wildland fire and may be managed for one or more objectives based on Land/Resource Management Plan direction.
3 and 4) Every wildland fire will be assessed following a decision support process that examines the full range of responses. The system currently being prototyped is the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS).
5) Once a prescribed fire is no longer meeting objectives stated specifically in the prescribed fire plan or project-level NEPA and is declared a wildfire, it receives the same reassessment and selection of response objectives as any other wildfire.

Two clarification statements from the "Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (2003)" will be retained:
1) The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is any specific action suitable to meet Fire Management Unit (FMU) objectives. Typically, the AMR ranges across a spectrum of tactical options (from monitoring to intensive management actions). The AMR is developed by using FMU strategies and objectives identified in the Fire Management Plan.
2) Human caused wildland fires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.

- These decisions do not represent a change in policy, but rather modify the 2003 Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy for pilot areas only, which were determined suitable and were willing to participate.

- Except for the pilot areas, there will be no change in implementation in the Federal Wildland Fire Policy in 2008. Pilot testing will include ongoing communication to agency staff, fire personnel, local community media, and other interested parties.

- Once the pilot testing is completed in 2008, finalized guidance and a revised Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Policy are expected to be completed by January, 2009 for all federal lands. Implementing new policy will require that appropriate language is written into Land/Resource Management Plans.

- There will be no immediate change in the management of human-caused fires. However, a study regarding human-caused ignitions and the feasibility of allowing such fires to achieve resource objectives will begin in late 2008, with implementation of findings anticipated within two years.

Pilot Areas for Modification of Federal Fire Policy Implementation
Summer 2008

Pacific 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, and Gunnison National Forests) (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-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Mountain Prairie Region, Browns 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 Dwellings 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-U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Alaska Region: 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
State of Alaska