

# **Appendix K: Wildland Fire Appropriate Management Response and Wildland Fire Suppression Guidelines**

## **Wildland Fire Appropriate Management Response**

Use of appropriate management response (AMR) on all wildland fire allows agency administrators the ability to choose from a full spectrum of fire suppression actions. Although all wildland fires must have an appropriate action taken to suppress them, not all wildfires need to be suppressed with the same level of intensity. Appropriate suppression actions, whether aggressive, high intensity or low intensity actions, will be based on preplanned analysis and executed to minimize suppression costs plus resource losses, consistent with land management objectives, including the threat to life and property.

Preplanned analysis criteria has been identified through the Phase One Fire Management Planning Process (see glossary) in which an interdisciplinary team of resource, fire, and line management representatives classified public land into the two different management categories listed as follows:

### **Category A**

Those lands where wildland fire should be excluded; using only prescribed fire or non-fire treatment techniques to achieve the desired resource conditions or management of the area. The appropriate management response for these lands would be full suppression. In multiple fire situations, with fires occurring within both land categories, suppression priorities would be given to those fires burning within this classification of land. When multiple fires occur within Category A, suppression priority would be based on the threat or potential threat to public safety, structures, private property, and improvements.

Criteria used to determine Category A land include:

- Protecting public safety;
- Threat to private land;
- Protecting capital improvements;
- Protecting administrative/recreational sites;
- Minimizing loss of shrub cover and biological soil crusts;
- Minimizing increase in annual vegetation types;
- Limiting or reducing medusahead, cheatgrass, and other noxious species;
- Providing diverse perennial species;
- Protecting habitat for special status plant species;
- Protecting Federal and State lands identified under fire protection agreements.

### **Category B**

Those lands where wildland fire could/should be used in addition to prescribed fire to meet desired resource conditions or management. Under this category of land the appropriate management response could vary based on predetermined fire and resource criteria (see criteria below) for land in and adjacent to the fire location. In multiple fire situations, Category A land would, with the exception of threat to life, receive higher priority for suppression actions than would Category B land.

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While all wildland fires would receive a suppression response, that response would not always be full suppression. Less than full suppression responses would occur only during spring early or late summer and fall months, dependant on weather conditions, or in multiple fire situations when suppression forces are not adequate to respond to all going fires. With multiple fires burning, suppression actions would occur in order of priority, with lower priority fires receiving suppression action as forces become available. All other fires receiving less than full suppression actions must meet the following fire criteria thresholds:

- Fire located within Category B land;
- Live fuel moisture in big sagebrush at 120 percent or more with 10-hour fuel stick readings of 5 percent or above or live fuels of 95 percent or above and 10-hour fuel stick reading of 8 percent or above;
- Predicted, maximum sustained wind speed of 10 mph (obtained from fire weather forecast);
- Observed and predicted fire behavior will continue to meet resource management objectives;
- No threat to public safety;
- Not a threat to private, State or other Federal land (unless those lands are under a signed mutual agreement with the landowner or agency for less than full suppression actions);
- Fires ignition is not suspected to be arson;
- Actions are in accordance with the "Preparedness Level 3" or less of the local unit (this level is based on the number of fire suppression resources that are committed to ongoing fire suppression activities, as more resources are committed the level raises).

If any of these criteria are exceeded the appropriate management response becomes that of full suppression, with the only exception to this occurring in a multiple fire situation where suppression actions are based on priority.

Within Category B, land resource considerations would be addressed and updated annually to reflect appropriate changes in the values to be protected. Resource criteria has been identified as to those criteria which may lead to full suppression actions and those criteria which may lead to less than full suppression actions, those criteria include but are not limited to the following.

Resource criteria that may lead to full suppression action include but are not limited to:

- Burning vegetation resources with commodity values;
- Burning within the perimeter of an area burned within the last 10 years;
- Burning within the perimeter of a fire rehabilitation area;
- Burning within sensitive vegetation types/habitat (key winter range, annual grasslands, shrub/annual grassland, rabbit brush/grassland, or salt desert shrub); and
- Burning more than one-third of a 5<sup>th</sup> code watershed in a 3-year period.

Resource criteria that may lead to less than full suppression actions include but are not limited to:

- Burning within riparian areas;
- Burning within designated ACEC/RNA areas (allow to monitor natural processes);
- Burning within a wilderness or wilderness study area;
- Burning within given vegetation types (juniper, aspen, mountain big sagebrush, mountain brush);
- Burning at 5,500 feet elevation or above (vegetation communities capable of natural rehabilitation); or
- Burning within an area that has a prescribed fire plan in place.

The authorized officer (field manager or designated representative) has the authority to modify fire and resource criteria for either category of land based on site-specific resource management objectives identified through the adaptive management process.

## **General Suppression Guidelines for the NCA/Wilderness**

- A Resource Advisor will be dispatched to all fires occurring in or threatening the NCA or Wilderness Areas
- Use of heavy equipment (bulldozers, etc..) will only be used in the NCA or Wilderness Areas if the fire is threatening human life or property. The Field Manger must approve the use of heavy equipment in all cases.
- Air resources including helicopters, smokejumpers, and air tankers will be included in the WILDCAD system for all NCA and Wilderness fire suppression activities.
- Use of retardant must be approved by the Field Manager, if retardant is not approved water may be dropped from retardant aircraft.
- All fire suppression activities will use Minimum Impact Suppression Techniques (MIST) at all times.
- Hand crews may use conventional hand tools and may conservatively use chain saws for fire line construction. Chain saw use and line width should be kept to a minimum. Utilization of existing natural barriers, minimum “scratch line”, and cold trailing is encouraged where feasible. Handline construction will be rehabilitated back to the natural contour.
- A “Leave No Trace” policy will be used in the NCA and Wilderness Areas. All evidence of human activity must be removed, to the maximum extent possible.
- Heavy equipment could be used in the emigrant trail corridor subject to:
  - No blading would be allowed on roads or trails
  - Transport of equipment through the corridor would be allowed on Class C trail segments with the approval of a qualified resource advisor. Transport of equipment would be allowed on Class D and E trail segments.
  - Blading of firelines within the immediate viewshed could be allowed to protect property and life when no other options are available and approved by the resource advisor. Any blading would be followed by immediate stabilization and subsequent restoration of disturbed soils, vegetation and visual quality.

## **Wilderness Specific Suppression Guidelines**

- If motorized vehicle use is authorized in fire suppression efforts in Wilderness it will remain on predetermined existing ways inside.
- Helibases, staging areas, and fire camps will be located outside of the Wilderness Areas, unless it is authorized by the Resource Advisor.
- Landing of helicopters will be kept to a minimum and will only occur in existing openings.

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