

Reclamation Manual

Directives and Standards

- Subject:** Wildland Fire Management (WFM)
- Purpose:** This Directive and Standard (D&S) provides direction for implementing and managing the Bureau of Reclamation's (Reclamation) WFM program in compliance with existing law and Department of the Interior (Department) requirements. This D&S benefits Reclamation's WFM program by improving efficiency and effectiveness and ensuring consistency between Reclamation and other Department bureaus with established WFM programs.
- Authority:** The Reclamation Act (Act of June 17, 1902, ch. 1093, 32 Stat. 388); Protection of Timber Act of September 20, 1922 (ch. 349, 42 Stat. 857; 16 U.S.C. § 594); Economy Act of June 30, 1932 (47 Stat. 417; 31 U.S.C. § 1535); Soil Conservation and Domestic Allotment Act of 1935 (ch. 85, 49 Stat. 163, 16 U.S.C. § 590a, et seq.); Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of 1955 (ch. 105, 69 Stat. 66; 42 U.S.C. §§ 1856-1856d); Robert T. Stafford Disaster Relief and Emergency Assistance Act, as amended (Pub. L. 93-288, as amended; 88 Stat. 143; 42 U.S.C. §§ 5121-5206.); Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of October 29, 1974 (Pub. L. 93-498; 88 Stat. 1535; 15 U.S.C. § 2201, et seq.); Federal Grant and Cooperative Agreements Act of 1977 (Pub. L. 95-224; 92 Stat. 3; 31 U.S.C. §§ 6301-6308); Supplemental Appropriations Act of 1982 (Pub. L. 97-257, Title I, ch. VIII; 96 Stat. 837); Temporary Emergency Wildfire Suppression Act of 1988 (Pub. L. 100-428; 102 Stat. 1615), as amended by the Wildfire Suppression Assistance Act of April 7, 1989 (Pub. L. 101-11; 103 Stat. 15; 42 U.S.C. §§ 1856m-1856p); Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (Pub. L. 108-148; 117 Stat. 1887; 16 U.S.C. § 6501, et seq.); Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act of 2006 (Pub. L. 109-103; 119 Stat. 2247; 33 U.S.C. § 2221); Departmental Manual (DM), Wildland Fire Management, General Policy and Procedures (620 DM 1); DM, Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (620 DM 3); and 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.
- Approving Official:** Director, Dam Safety and Infrastructure
- Contact:** Dam Safety and Infrastructure, Asset Management Division, (86-67200)
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1. **Introduction.** Department policy requires Reclamation, along with other bureaus, to participate in WFM. This D&S sets the framework for Reclamation WFM activities, including, but not limited to, entering into agreements with other federal, state, and local agencies; reporting wildfires; creating fire management plans (FMPs); wildfire education,

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- preparedness, training, prevention, stabilization, and suppression programs; post-fire rehabilitation and restoration activities; burned area emergency response (BAER); prescribed fire activities; and hazard fuels reduction.
2. **Applicability.** This D&S applies to all withdrawn or acquired lands under Reclamation's jurisdiction. It does not apply to land in which Reclamation's interest arises from a lease, permit license, or an easement. For Reclamation land managed by a federal or non-federal managing partner, future management agreements or contracts must satisfy the requirements of this D&S. If the current management agreement does not require such action by the managing partner, then the responsibility for compliance will remain with Reclamation's regional Fire Management Officers/Fire Program Managers (FMO/FPM), until the new management agreement or contract is negotiated.
 3. **Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (FWFMP).** The 2001 FWFMP is a comprehensive statement of wildland fire policy coordinated between and adopted by the Department and Department of Agriculture. The Secretary of the Interior instructed the Deputy Commissioner of the Bureau of Indian Affairs; the Commissioner of Reclamation; and the Directors of the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Geological Survey to implement the FWFMP.
 - A. **Guidance for Implementing the FWFMP.** The Wildland Fire Executive Council (WFEC) approved the *Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* (2009), which advises departments and agencies to "review and revise, as appropriate, all manuals, handbooks, guidebooks, plans, agreements and other pertinent documents."
 - B. **FWFMP Implementation Responsibility.** When managing partners are responsible for wildfire suppression and related activities, Reclamation will retain responsibility for oversight to ensure requirements of the FWFMP are met. When managing partners are not responsible for wildfire suppression and related activities, Reclamation will retain all responsibility to ensure requirements of the FWFMP are met.
 4. **Department Policy.** In establishing and maintaining the WFM program, Reclamation will follow Department policy as described in the Department Manual (DM), Series 34-*Public Land*, Part 620 *Wildland Fire Management*, [620 DM](#)
 5. **WFM Activity Standards.** All Reclamation wildfire suppression, prescribed fire, and BAER work will be performed to Department standards as outlined in the DM. Regional FMOs/FPMs will coordinate with Reclamation staff to meet the following standards.

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- A. **Environmental Compliance.** Before work begins on hazard fuels reduction projects, prescribed fire burn plans (burn plans), and BAER activities, Reclamation will complete and submit the necessary National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documentation and verify compliance with the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (NHPA) according to Reclamation Manual (RM) D&S, *Cultural Resources Management (CRM)*, LND 02-01. When appropriate, the Department's categorical exclusions for these activities will be used.
- B. **Hazard Fuels Reduction.** Reclamation will establish programs to reduce hazard fuels, especially in wildland urban interface (WUI) areas and near significant Reclamation facilities. This is accomplished through in-house personnel and resources; IAs with federal agencies; cooperative agreements or contracts with Indian tribes, state agencies, or local agencies; or private contractors. Reclamation will manage programs in the most cost-effective manner; considering funding, staff expertise, available resources, and other pertinent factors.
- C. **BAER, Stabilization, and Rehabilitation.** BAER activities initiated by Reclamation will conform to the Department's requirements described in *Wildland Fire Management*, 620 DM 4. Reclamation will conduct BAER to stabilize and prevent further degradation of Reclamation lands or resources due to a recent wildland fire. As needed, Reclamation will undertake burned area rehabilitation to facilitate recovery of Reclamation land to management-approved conditions (general operational guidance can be found in the *Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response Guidebook*). These actions are intended to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health and safety, community infrastructures, and operational and water storage/conveyance facilities or features.
- (1) **Reporting Hazard Fuels Reduction and BAER.** Reporting of hazard fuels reduction and BAER project accomplishments will be done using the National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS).
- D. **Prescribed Fire Activities.** Only agencies, contractors, employees, or individuals meeting the Department's approved position qualifications will perform prescribed fire activities on Reclamation lands. All prescribed fire planning, preparation, and implementation will adhere to the Department's approved standards. No prescribed fire ignition will be undertaken without an approved burn plan. These procedures are detailed in the *NWCG Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide*, PMS 484 and the *NWCG Prescribed Fire Complexity Rating System Guide*, PMS 424.

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- (1) **Prescribed Fire Approval.** The Commissioner has final approval of burn plans and can delegate authority to a management level no lower than an area manager. All burn plans must be technically reviewed and approved by an individual qualified at the level of complexity for the planned burn. Programmatic burn plans may be prepared for facility, feature, or area office geographic areas with similar fuel types, under similar working conditions, and using similar firing methods (e.g., pile burning).
 - E. **Wildfire Suppression.** Reclamation will, with assistance from FMOs/FPMs, establish agreements or contracts with federal agencies, non-federal land management entities, or other wildfire suppression organizations for wildfire suppression on Reclamation lands. Only agencies, contractors, employees, or individuals meeting the Department's approved position qualifications and standards are to provide wildfire suppression for Reclamation lands. These qualifications are detailed in the *National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Standards for Wildland Fire Position Qualifications*, PMS 310-1.
6. **Preparation of FMPs.** Each region will ensure FMPs are developed for all Reclamation lands with burnable vegetation. For Reclamation lands managed by a federal or non-federal managing partner, future management agreements or contracts must satisfy the FMP development requirement. If the partner previously developed an FMP, a Reclamation area manager will review, verify the plan satisfies D&S requirements, and adopt the plan. If the current management agreement does not require such action by the managing partner, then responsibility for the FMP development will remain with Reclamation, until the new management agreement or contract is negotiated. At a minimum, FMPs will:
 - A. Analyze and define how to manage WFM activities;
 - B. Identify objectives and goals for the fire management program;
 - C. Follow interagency guidelines for development and use of FMP templates;
 - D. Coordinate collaboration with neighboring land management entities, where the WFM program crosses jurisdictional boundaries, to implement and meet the FWFMP goals;
 - E. Describe and evaluate the wildfire suppression and management capabilities of responsible entities covered by the FMP to achieve objectives and meet NWCG standards;
 - F. Meet NEPA and NHPA requirements for implementation of the FMP;
 - G. Be developed concurrently with or based on a current and approved land use or resource management plan development process; and

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- H. Consider and coordinate with Standing Operating Procedures (SOPs) and Emergency Action Plans (EAPs) for applicable Reclamation facilities.
7. **Staffing.** Regional Directors (RDs) and managers will ensure staffing to implement the WFM program. This will require the designation of a regional FMO/FPM position. This position may be either a full-time or collateral duty depending upon the workload.
- A. **Qualified Wildfire Suppression Personnel.** Reclamation will strive to support the national wildfire suppression effort by developing and maintaining fire incident qualifications of personnel in the national Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS).
- (1) **Qualifications and Training.** RDs will, at a minimum, make these high-demand skill and knowledge positions available for training and qualification: geographic information system specialists, infrared interpreters, rehabilitation specialists, hazardous materials specialists, logistics specialists, etc. Wildfire suppression training for these positions will be funded from regional or area office lands resource management or WFM budgets.
 - (2) **Red Card Certification.** Managers will provide staff with needed training and qualification development for obtaining and maintaining a valid Red Card. A Red Card shows the holder has completed all coursework and training required for a specific position. Many federal and state agencies require all firefighters assigned to a wildland fire to have a Red Card.
 - (3) **National Multi-Agency Coordination Group (NMAC) National Preparedness Levels Staffing Response.** During national preparedness levels 1, 2, 3, and 4, supervisors may decline to make an IQCS qualified employee available; due to home unit work-load requirements. At national preparedness level 5, it is mandatory to allow non-critical IQCS qualified employees to participate in fire assignments for up to 14 days at a time.
8. **Reimbursability.** Many of the costs associated with WFM activities are reimbursable. These costs are either reimbursed by Reclamation's Deputy Commissioner for Operations for activities conducted by other agencies or entities or by others, if Reclamation conducts the WFM activities.

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- A. **Funding.** Funds for reimbursement of incurred WFM costs may come from several sources. The costs incurred by responding to and managing wildland fires will vary greatly depending on different variables and factors. Where practical, other sources of funds will be used in place of reimbursement for wildfire suppression costs (e.g., other federal agencies can suppress and absorb the cost of a wildfire posing a threat to their lands or project beneficiaries may reimburse incurred costs). When other sources of funds are unavailable, managers will use regional or area office funds and excess costs thereafter will be reported to the RD.
- B. **WFM Costs Reimbursable by Reclamation.** When other entities provide WFM services and support to Reclamation, it must be determined if these activities are reimbursable (e.g., a federal or state agency suppressed a wildfire on Reclamation land). Unless otherwise indicated by the Deputy Commissioner for Operations or RD, reimbursability will be determined by the area manager. During the determination process, project-specific legislation, Department and Reclamation policies, and existing cooperative agreements and contracts will be consulted. If the cost(s) is/are determined to be reimbursable by Reclamation, reimbursement will be made in a timely manner.
9. **Wildland Fires Caused by Humans.** The determination of ignition being human caused results from a fire investigation report prepared by a trained fire investigator. Reclamation will determine whether to formally investigate for human involvement based on the responding agency's initial attack fire report. For each human-caused fire, where an identifiable individual, organization, or agency is determined to be responsible, RDs will determine if it is in the best interests of the United States to pursue recovery of damages and costs.
10. **Definitions.**
- A. **Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER).** Planned actions to stabilize and prevent unacceptable degradation to natural and cultural resources; minimize threats to life or property resulting from the effects of a fire; or repair, replace, and/or construct physical improvements necessary to prevent degradation of land or resources.
- B. **Contract.** A mutually binding legal relationship obligating a buyer (Reclamation) to pay for supplies, services, or construction furnished by a seller (e.g., a non-federal agency). The principal purpose of a contract is to acquire property or services for the direct benefit or use of the U.S. government.

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- C. **Cooperative Agreements.** Financial assistance agreements with non-federal agencies to meet needs for wildfire suppression and/or prescribed fire services. The “principal purpose” of a cooperative agreement must be “to transfer a thing of value” to the non-federal agency “to carry out a public purpose,” and not to acquire “property or services for the direct benefit or use of the United States Government” (RM D&S, *Requirements for Award and Administration of Financial Assistance Agreements (Grants and Cooperative Agreements)*, ACM 01-01). Please note that “cooperative agreement” is also informally used to describe any collaborative agreement between wildfire suppression agencies.
- D. **Fire Management Plan (FMP).** A plan which identifies and integrates all WFM and related activities within the context of approved land, resource, and facility operation and management plans. It defines a program to manage wildland fires (wildfire, prescribed fire, and use of wildland fire) assuring WFM goals and components are coordinated and approved by Reclamation land managers. The plan is supplemented by operational plans, including, but not limited to, preparedness plans, preplanned dispatch plans (annual interagency operating plans), burn plans, and fire prevention plans.
- E. **Hazard Fuel.** A fuel complex defined by kind, arrangement, volume, condition, and location that presents a threat of ignition and resistance to control (NWCG, *Glossary of Wildland Fire*, PMS 205).
- F. **Interagency Agreements (IA).** Agreements with federal agencies to acquire wildfire suppression and/or prescribed fire services for Reclamation.
- G. **Managing Partner.** An entity with whom Reclamation has entered an agreement or contract to manage lands and/or facilities under Reclamation’s jurisdiction.
- H. **National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG).** A group formed under the direction of the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture to improve the coordination and effectiveness of wildland fire activities and to coordinate programs of the participating wildfire management agencies to avoid wasteful duplication and provide a means of constructively working together. The group provides a formalized system to agree upon standards of training, equipment, qualifications, and other operational functions.
- I. **Prescribed Fire.** A wildland fire originating from a planned ignition in accordance with applicable laws, policies, and regulations to meet specific objectives (Fire Management Board, *Updated Federal Wildland Fire Policy Terms and Definitions for the NWCG Glossary*, FMB Memorandum No. 19-004a).

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- J. **Prescribed Fire Burn Plan (Burn Plan).** A plan required for each fire application ignited by management. Plans are documents prepared by qualified personnel, approved by the agency administrator, and include criteria for the conditions under which the fire will be conducted (a prescription). Plan content varies among the agencies (NWCG, *Glossary of Wildland Fire*, PMS 205).
- K. **Red Card.** An illustration of an individual's current wildland fire qualifications.
- L. **Fire Management Officer/Fire Program Manager (FMO/FPM).** Responsible for safeguarding people's lives and properties by planning, formulating, implementing, and supervising fire safety plans that take care of specific fire and life safety systems.
- M. **Use of Wildland Fire.** Management of wildfire or prescribed fire to meet resource objectives specified in land/resource management plans. (Fire Management Board, *Updated Federal Wildland Fire Policy Terms and Definitions for the NWCG Glossary*, FMB Memorandum No. 19-004a).
- N. **Wildfire.** A wildland fire originating from an unplanned ignition, such as lightning, volcanos, unauthorized and accidental human caused fires, and prescribed fires that are declared wildfires (Fire Management Board, *Updated Federal Wildland Fire Policy Terms and Definitions for the NWCG Glossary*, FMB Memorandum No. 19-004a).
- O. **Wildland Fire Executive Council (WFEC).** A disbanded discretionary advisory committee, which provided advice and recommendations on national wildland fire management, established under the authorities of the Secretary of the Interior and Secretary of Agriculture, in furtherance of 43 U.S.C. 1457 and provisions of the Fish and Wildlife Act of 1956 (16 U.S.C. 742a-742j), the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (43 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*), the National Wildlife Refuge System Improvement Act of 1997 (16 U.S.C. 668dd-668ee), and the National Forest Management Act of 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 *et seq.*) (Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture, *Wildland Fire Executive Council Charter*).
- P. **Wildfire Suppression.** An appropriate management response to wildfire or prescribed fire that results in curtailment of fire spread and eliminates all identified threats from the particular fire (NWCG, *Glossary of Wildland Fire*, PMS 205).
- Q. **Wildland.** An area in which development is essentially non-existent, except for roads, railroads, dams, canals, pipelines, powerlines, and similar facilities. Structures, if any, are widely scattered (NWCG, *Glossary of Wildland Fire*, PMS 205).

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- R. **Wildland Fire.** Any non-structure fire that occurs in vegetation or natural fuels. Includes Wildfires and Prescribed Fires (Fire Management Board, *Updated Federal Wildland Fire Policy Terms and Definitions for the NWCG Glossary*, FMB Memorandum No. 19-004a).
- S. **Wildland Fire Management (WFM) Activities.** Include, but are not limited to, fire management planning and strategies; wildfire education, preparedness, training, prevention, stabilization, and suppression programs; post-fire rehabilitation and restoration activities; burned area emergency response (BAER); prescribed fire activities; and hazard fuels reduction.
- T. **Wildland Urban Interface (WUI).** The line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetation fuels (Fire Management Board, *Updated Federal Wildland Fire Policy Terms and Definitions for the NWCG Glossary*, FMB Memorandum No. 19-004a).
11. **Review Period.** The originating office will review this release every 2 years.

RECLAMATION MANUAL TRANSMITTAL SHEET

Effective Date: _____

Release No. _____

Ensure all employees needing this information are provided a copy of this release.

Reclamation Manual Release Number and Subject

Summary of Changes

NOTE: This Reclamation Manual release applies to all Reclamation employees. When an exclusive bargaining unit exists, changes to this release may be subject to the provisions of collective bargaining agreements.

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Filed by: _____

Date: _____