

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

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Series: Public Lands

Part 620: Wildland Fire Management

Chapter 2: General Policy and Procedures - Alaska

Originating Office: Office of Managing Risk and Public Safety

620 DM 2

2.1 Purpose. This chapter provides Departmental policy and guidance regarding wildland fire suppression and organization in Alaska.

2.2 Authority.

- A. Protection Act of September 20, 1922, (42 Stat. 857; 16 U.S.C. 594).
- B. Economy Act of June 30, 1932, (47 Stat. 417; 31 U.S.C. 686).
- C. National Park Service Act, as amended (67 Stat. 495; 16 U.S.C. 1b).
- D. Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of May 27, 1955, (69 Stat. 66; 42 U.S.C. 1856a).
- E. Disaster Relief Act of May 22, 1974, (88 Stat. 143; 42 U.S.C. 5121).
- F. Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, (90 Stat. 2743).
- G. Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of December 18, 1971, (85 Stat. 688; 43 U.S.C. 1601).
- H. Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of December 2, 1980, (94 Stat. 2371; 16 U.S.C. Ch. 51).
- I. Tribal Self-Governance Act of 1994 (P.L. 103-413; 25 U.S.C. 458aa et seq).
- J. Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (P.L. 103-32).

2.3 Responsibility. The Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget provides program coordination of activities, including wildland fire management within the Department by the Secretary of the Interior as referenced in 620 DM 1.2. Existing delegations, as referenced in 620 DM 2.2, to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the National Park Service (NPS) provide program direction to

allow respective agencies to take appropriate action in wildland fire management.

2.4 Policy. BLM will maintain and operate the Department of the Interior wildland fire suppression organization in Alaska with the primary intention of providing cost-effective suppression services and minimizing unnecessary duplication of suppression systems for Department of the Interior agencies. BLM will also provide consistency in State and Native wildland fire relationships and provide Statewide mobility of wildland fire resources.

BLM is authorized to provide safe, cost-effective emergency wildland fire suppression services in support of land, natural and cultural resource management plans on Department of the Interior administered land and on those lands that require protection under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C.1620(e)), herein after referred to as Native land. BLM will execute these services within the framework of approved fire management plans or within the mutually agreed upon standards established by the respective land managers/owners.

A. Nothing herein relieves agency administrators in the Interior bureaus of the management responsibility and accountability for activities occurring on their respective lands.

B. Wildland fire suppression and other fire management activities provided on Native lands under the authority of the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended (43 U.S.C. 1620(e)), will consider Native land managers on an equal basis with Federal land managers.

C. Each bureau will continue to use its delegated authority for application of wildland fire management activities such as planning, education and prevention, use of prescribed fire, establishing emergency suppression strategies, and setting emergency suppression priorities for the wildland fire suppression organization on respective bureau lands.

2.5 Funding Relationships.

A. Resources which are essential for wildland fire suppression shall be cooperatively planned for and funded through the required Department of the Interior budget planning process.

B. Planning and funding, as used in this Manual Part, includes the fire suppression resources necessary to efficiently and effectively meet agreed upon fire suppression standards and objectives.

C. Specific organizational relationships between the BLM, other bureaus, and Native land/manager owners will be developed in annual interagency operating and financial plans.

2.6 Cooperation.

A. When economically and operationally beneficial for protection of Departmental lands and Native allotments, cooperative agreements may be entered into between BLM and the State of Alaska or other wildland fire suppression organizations to provide suppression services as authorized in 2.4 above. These agreements shall be coordinated with the appropriate bureaus and Native land managers/owners.

B. The basic responsibility for providing wildland fire suppression service to Departmental lands and Native allotments may not be transferred from the BLM. Where BLM cooperative suppression agreements are in effect, the responsibility for agreement compliance and performance remains with the BLM, subject to the land manager's delegation of authority which shall state suppression standards.

C. In southeast Alaska (Kodiak Island, Afognak Island, and east of the Kenai National Wildlife Refuge extending easterly and south) each bureau is authorized to enter into individual cooperative agreements, as necessary, to suppress wildland fires on lands under their respective jurisdictions.

2.7 Coordination. The Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG) is established and maintained through an interagency Memorandum of Understanding. AWFCG is charged with coordinating interagency wildland fire management activities in Alaska. Authority is delegated from agency heads to respective bureau representatives in the group to make wildland fire management decisions and set priorities in accordance with respective bureau policies. The AWFCG is comprised of representatives from BLM, NPS, FWS, and BIA, and will include other cooperators as appropriate.

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