

Chapter 2 Alternatives Including the Fire and Fuels Amendment

2.1 Introduction to Alternatives

This chapter describes the two alternatives: the No Action Alternative and the Preferred. The Preferred Alternative (Proposed Action) is the Land Use Plan Amendment to provide wildland fire and fuels management guidance and direction to achieve land use and resource objectives.

2.2 Scoping and Alternative Development

Two alternatives were identified. The following summarizes the alternative development process; a full accounting, including dates, is found in Chapter 4.

- AFS staff initiated internal BLM participation by asking Field Office staffs to identify issues and concerns.
- Public participation was invited during Scoping.
- AFS briefed the BLM Resource Advisory Council and solicited comments and participation in the planning effort.
- AFS developed a Preferred Alternative based on comments received.

2.3 Management Common to Both Alternatives

The following definitions, policies and procedures are currently in place and operational on all BLM-managed lands in Alaska. They have been implemented through various laws, regulations, interagency documents, instruction memorandum and by BLM national and State policy¹. Under the No Action Alternative, fire management on BLM-managed lands would continue to be implemented under those documents. In the Preferred Alternative, these definitions, policies and procedures are aggregated into the Land Use Plan Amendment.

¹ See Appendix A for a list of laws, regulations, instruction memorandum, etc., Appendix B for a summary of the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan (AIWFMP), Appendix C for information on the Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG).

Fire management has been conducted by agreements executed on an interagency, landscape-scale basis since the early 1980s². This effort standardized policies and procedures among land managing agencies in Alaska. As a result, four wildland fire suppression management options (**Critical, Full, Modified, Limited**) are utilized statewide by all federal, State and Native land managers. Each management option is defined by objectives, management constraints, and values to be protected. The management option categorizations ensure:

- ♦ human life, designated private property and identified resources receive an appropriate level of protection with available firefighting resources,
- ♦ the ability to achieve land use and resource management objectives is optimized,
- ♦ and the cost of the suppression effort is commensurate with values identified for protection.

Options are assigned on a landscape scale across agency boundaries³. Management option categorizations are designed to be ecologically and fiscally sound, operationally feasible, and sufficiently flexible to respond to changes in objectives, fire conditions, land use patterns, resource information, new technologies and new scientific findings. The designation of a management option pre-selects strategies (appropriate management response) assigned to accomplish established land use and resource objectives. Land manager/owner(s) including BLM have selected management options based upon an evaluation of their individual legal mandates, policies, regulations, resource management objectives, and local conditions. Six of the existing RMPs and MFPs implemented these management options.

² See Appendix D for a history of the interagency fire planning effort.

³ For a graphic description of management option designations: see Map 3. Fire Management Options for BLM-Managed Lands and Map 4. Alaska Statewide Fire Management Options.

Table 2-1: Comparison of Management Option Classifications

	Critical	Full	Modified	Limited
% of BLM-Managed Acres	0.2%	8%	14%	78%
Anticipated Average Annual Fire Occurrence	1.1 fires @30.3 acres	12.2 fires @ 22,219.7 acres	13.3 fires @ 43,179.3 acres	32.9 fires @ 209,926.8 acres
Priority for Allocation of Suppression Forces	First	Second	Third	Fourth
Lands Designated	Inhabited property, populated areas and BLM-managed lands adjacent to populated areas (wildland urban interface), National Historic Landmarks.	Cultural and paleontological sites, structures on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, BLM-developed recreational facilities, physical developments, administrative sites and cabins, uninhabited structures, high-value natural resources, and other high-value areas.	Lands where resource objectives are met when the numbers of acres burned during the time of year when large fires are likely is restricted, fire performs its ecological role when fire potential lessens, and acres burned are balanced with suppression costs.	Lands where resource objectives are met by the natural fire regime and areas where the cost of suppression may exceed the value of the resources to be protected, the environmental impacts of fire suppression activities may have more negative impacts on the resources than the effects of the fire, or the exclusion of fire may be detrimental to the fire dependent ecosystem.
Appropriate Management Response for Wildland Fire	Aggressive and continued actions to protect the area from fire without compromising firefighter safety.	Aggressive action to minimize resource damage and suppress the fires at the smallest reasonably possible number of acres.	<i>High Level</i> (contingent upon availability of suppression resources): Initial attack with intent to contain the fire. <i>Low Level</i> : Routine surveillance to ensure that identified values are protected and that adjacent higher priority management areas are not compromised.	Allow fire to function in its natural ecological role while conducting routine surveillance to observe fire activity and to determine if site-specific values or adjacent higher priority management areas are compromised.

2.3.1 Management Options

Within each management option description, expected levels of activity for wildland fire are based on the 15-year average of the number of fires and acres burned since the implementation of the interagency fire management plans. Ownership is identified by the point of ignition of the fire. The levels of activity would be similar under either alternative; all figures quoted are as of October 2003.

Table 2-1 on page 2-2 compares management option classifications

2.3.1a Critical Management Option

To protect human life and inhabited property, the Critical management option is assigned to populated areas, BLM-managed lands adjacent to populated areas and in the wildland urban interface.⁴ National Historic Landmarks are designated Critical in compliance with State and federal regulations.

Wildland fires that occur on Critical management option lands are given the highest priority for suppression action. Protection of life or occupied property has priority over National Historic Landmarks. The appropriate management response to wildland fires in Critical is aggressive and continued actions to protect the area from fire without compromising firefighter safety. If a wildland fire is not contained with initial attack forces, a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) is completed to determine the suppression actions necessary to meet objectives based on the potential effects on resources, commitment of fire fighting personnel required, and costs.

BLM manages approximately **147,500 acres** under the Critical Management Option designation. Figure 2.1 delineates the anticipated number of fires and acres burned on BLM-managed lands designated Critical. The BLM-managed lands withdrawn for military use are shown separately due to the distinctly different

⁴ The 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan defines wildland urban interface (WUI) as “The line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuel.”

mandated uses of the lands.⁵ (See Appendix E for fire occurrence statistics.)

Figure 2.1
Critical Management Option

	Anticipated Average Annual Occurrence			
	Critical Management Option			
	Human-caused		Lightning-caused	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
Military withdrawal	0.5	0.23	0	0
Other	0.5	13.4	0.1	16.7
BLM-managed Total	1	13.63	0.1	16.7

2.3.1b Full Management Option

This option provides for protection of cultural and paleontological sites, BLM-developed recreational facilities, physical developments, administrative sites and cabins, uninhabited structures, high-value natural resources, and other high-value areas that do not involve the protection of human life and inhabited property.

The appropriate management response to a wildland fire on lands designated Full is aggressive action to minimize resource damage and suppress the fires at the smallest reasonably possible number of acres. If a wildland fire is not contained with initial attack forces, a WFSA is required. Wildland fires within or threatening a Critical management area receive a higher priority for allocation of suppression forces than a fire in Full.

BLM manages approximately **7 million acres** under Full Management Option designation. Figure 2.2 delineates the anticipated number of

⁵ Approximately 1.8 million acres of BLM-managed lands is withdrawn for military use. The U.S. Army-Alaska has an active fuels management program documented in the Integrated Natural Resource Management Plans for each Installation, which is updated every five years. The fuels management projects to reduce hazard fuel conditions are designed to lessen fire behavior characteristics in order to increase the likelihood of success of suppression tactics. The Army is also working with AFS tracking fire danger indices to determine suitable conditions for training exercises during which pyrotechnics are used. The intent is that the use will be in a "window" in which large fire growth is minimized. Both these efforts are anticipated to lessen the likelihood of the Military human-caused fires impacting the adjacent private lands.

fires and acres burned on BLM-managed lands designated Full.

Figure 2.2
Full Management Option

Anticipated Average Annual Occurrence				
	Full Management Option			
	Human-caused		Lightning-caused	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
Military withdrawal	1.7	1,339.4	0.1	0.2
Other	2.3	665.8	8.1	22,014.3
BLM-managed Total	4	2,005.2	8.2	22,014.5

2.3.1c Limited Management Option

The Limited management option is assigned to areas where fire occurrence is essential to the biodiversity of the resources and the long-term ecological health of the land. This classification acknowledges fire as a vital component of Alaskan ecosystems and possible detrimental effects of fire exclusion. In Limited, wildland fire is used as a management tool to maintain, enhance and improve the ecological condition of ecosystems.

A Limited management option designation is also assigned to areas where the cost of suppression may exceed the value of the resources to be protected or the environmental impacts of fire suppression activities may have more negative impacts on the resources than the effects of the fire.

Limited provides for vegetation management that produces a mixture of seral stages under the natural fire regime to maintain watershed condition, ecosystem health, and habitat conditions for fish and wildlife. The natural mosaic of habitats and plant diversity for all wildlife species and for subsistence activities is sustained and enhanced. Wildland fires occurring within this designation are allowed to burn under the influence of natural forces to benefit resources. Suppression actions may be initiated to keep a fire within the boundary of the management option or to protect identified higher value areas/sites. Site-specific areas that warrant higher levels of protection may occur within limited management areas. Appropriate suppression actions to protect these sites will be taken when warranted, without compromising the intent of the Limited management area.

The appropriate management response is to allow fire to function in its natural ecological role while conducting routine surveillance to observe fire activity and to determine if site-

specific values or adjacent higher priority management areas are compromised. Direct or indirect suppression actions may be initiated to keep a fire within the boundary of Limited, to protect identified sites, or to restrict fire size when extensive statewide activity has resulted in a lack of suppression resources to manage fires. When suppression actions other than surveillance are needed, a WFSA is completed.

BLM manages approximately **66 million acres** under Limited Management Options designation.

Figure 2.3 delineates the anticipated number of fires and acres burned on BLM-managed lands designated Limited.

Figure 2.3
Limited Management Option

Anticipated Average Annual Occurrence				
	Limited Management Option			
	Human-caused		Lightning-caused	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
Military withdrawal	5.5	17,780.0	0.6	455.2
Other	0.4	12,663.2	26.4	179,028.4
BLM-managed Total	5.9	30,443.2	27	179,483.6

2.3.1d Modified Management Option

In areas designated Modified, the goal is to balance acres burned with suppression costs and, when appropriate, to use wildland fire to accomplish land and resource management objectives. The number of acres burned during the time of year when large wildland fires are likely is restricted in order to minimize disturbance to identified habitats, potential commercial resources, and other identified natural and cultural resources. When the conditions that lead to large fires lessen, wildland fire is allowed to function in its natural ecological role. This benefits resources by sustaining a mosaic of appropriate seral stages.

The Modified option provides a management level where the appropriate management response changes from those analogous to Full when risks of large wildland fires are high to those analogous to Limited when risks are low. The conversion date⁶ based on the evaluation of land managers inputs, weather trends, and the statewide fire occurrence, is set each year by the AWFCG. The traditional date for most areas has been July 10. The appropriate management

⁶ Conversion dates for 1995-2003 are listed in Appendix E.

response for fires occurring within this designation, before the conversion date, is to contain the fires with initial attack forces. After the conversion date, the default action for all fires occurring within Modified areas will be to allow fire to function in its natural ecological role while conducting routine surveillance to observe fire activity and to determine if identified site-specific values and adjacent higher priority management areas are compromised. Direct or indirect suppression actions may be initiated to keep a fire within the boundary of the management option or to protect identified sites. Before the conversion date, a WFSA is completed if a fire is not contained by initial attack forces. After the conversion date, a WFSA is completed if suppression actions other than surveillance are needed. Critical and Full areas are higher priorities for the assignment of suppression forces than Modified.

BLM manages approximately **12 million acres** under Modified Management Options designation.)

Figure 2.4 delineates the anticipated number of fires and acres burned on BLM-managed lands designated Modified.

Figure 2.4
Modified Management Option

Anticipated Average Annual Occurrence				
	Modified Management Option			
	Human-caused		Lightning-caused	
	Fires	Acres	Fires	Acres
Military withdrawal	0.8	136.1	0.3	3,664.0
Other	1.3	74.9	10.9	39,304.3
BLM-managed Total	2.1	211	11.2	42,968.3

2.3.2 Management Option Designation Review and Changes

An essential attribute of the interagency fire planning in Alaska is the flexibility to change the fire management option as warranted due to changes in land use, resource objectives, protection needs, laws, suppression concerns, mandates or policies. As part of the annual management option review, if the appropriate management response for the designation is not followed for a fire, the area in which the fire occurred will be evaluated to determine if the management option designation is suitable and meeting current land use and resource objectives. The AWFCG has established procedures to review fire activity and management options.

The AWFCG procedures to change management option designations are in Appendix F.

2.3.3 Procedures, Restrictions and Constraints

The following are applicable to BLM-managed lands regardless of management option designation.

2.3.3a Air Quality

Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation (ADEC) regulates air quality. The ADEC Enhanced Smoke Management Plan and the State Implementation Plan stipulate regulations to be followed. (<http://www.state.ak.us/dec/home.htm>)

2.3.3b Cultural and Paleontological Resources

The requirements in CFR 36 Sec. 800, National Historic Preservation Act, and of the Alaska State Historic Preservation Office apply. Site-specific designations as noted in Section 2.3.3e will be applied and the map atlas maintained by suppression agencies updated yearly by Field Office staffs. Critical management option is assigned to National Historic Landmarks sites and Full to structures on or eligible for inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. Full may also be assigned to sites currently under excavation. When a site or structure is discovered during any fire management activity, the appropriate Field Office will be notified immediately.

A cultural resource evaluation is required for fuel treatment projects.

2.3.3c Safety

Public and firefighter safety is the single, overriding priority for every fire management activity without exception.

2.3.3d Standard Operating Procedures

Standard Operating Procedures are followed to exercise the following best management practices:

- ♦ provide a safe working environment,
- ♦ implement standard procedures and practices,
- ♦ reduce the adverse effects of suppression actions or other fire management activities on plant, fish and wildlife habitats,
- ♦ and promote ecosystem health.

**Table 2-2: No Action Alternative
Summary of Fire Management Guidance in Existing Land Use Plans**

Wildland Fire Management	Fuels Management															
<p>Wildland Fire Suppression Direction:</p> <p>Fire managed according to standards and procedures outlined in the appropriate interagency fire management plan. Use suppression classes: Critical, Full, Limited and Modified. (UC, CY, S, WM, FW, FG)</p> <p>Allows for change of suppression designations with changes in land use; annual review and modification. (S, WM,CY, FG, FW)</p> <p>Designate inhabited structures and commercial facilities as Critical sites and first priority for suppression. (S, WM, UC)</p> <p>No areas where suppression is required to protect natural resources. (S, WM)</p> <p>Allow fire under prescribed conditions. (NW)</p> <p>Provide for a natural fire occurrence (mosaic), where other important resources values would not be harmed. Fires should be < 10,000 acres. (SC)</p>	<p>Prescribed fire uses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • break up continuous fuels (S, WM, 40M) • improve wildlife habitat (S, WM, UC, NW, SC, FW, FG, CY) • increase vegetation diversity (S, WM, UC, 40M, FW, FG) • reduce hazards to structures and cultural sites (40M) • reduce fire hazards (FW, FG) <p>Prescribed burns (<u>4 > 7,500</u> acres each) to re-establish /improve habitat. (S) and Prescribed burns (<u>4 > 7,500</u> acres each) to re-establish /improve habitat: Trail Creek, Ophir Creek, Champion Creek, and Bear Creek areas. (WM) (Targeted timelines have lapsed.)</p> <p>Prescribed fire in Mosquito Flats. (40M)</p> <p>Include constraints in Burn Plans to protect commercial timber, climax-dependent species, and swan and raptor habitat; prevent interference with recreation and view shed; and prohibit ORVs from areas to keep erosion to a minimum for a period of time after burn. (SC)</p>															
<p>Resource Protection Guidelines:</p> <p>Protect significant cultural resources. (SC, SW, 40M)</p> <p>Monitor to document achievement of wildlife goals. (CY)</p> <p>Protect areas of identified habitats including sensitive, threatened, and endangered plants and animals. (NW) Manage fire to promote wildlife habitat. (S, WM, SW (Moose) and 40M (Caribou))</p> <p>Develop and implement Fire Management Plan. (NW, FW, FG)</p> <p>Protect commercial timber stands. (SC)</p> <p>Maintain watershed cover in healthy condition through use of natural or prescribed fire. (40M)</p>	<p>Other Treatments:</p> <p>Mechanically remove shrubs in 1/5-1/4 acres patches on known sharptail grouse leks along the Taylor Highway. (40M)</p> <p>General:</p> <p>Conduct inventory of fuel types and natural barriers for the benefit of limited action and prescribed fire. (40M)</p> <p>Conduct delineation and monitoring studies related to wildlife-fire-succession relationships within recommended prescribed fire areas. (40M)</p>															
<p>Plan codes:</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>CY Central Yukon RMP</td> <td>FG Fort Greely RMP</td> <td>FW Fort Wainwright RMP</td> <td>40M Fortymile MFP</td> <td>NW Northwest MFP</td> </tr> <tr> <td>S Steese National Conservation Area RMP</td> <td>SC Southcentral MFP</td> <td></td> <td>SW Southwest MFP</td> <td>UC Utility Corridor RMP</td> </tr> <tr> <td>WM White Mountains National Recreation Area RMP</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> </table>		CY Central Yukon RMP	FG Fort Greely RMP	FW Fort Wainwright RMP	40M Fortymile MFP	NW Northwest MFP	S Steese National Conservation Area RMP	SC Southcentral MFP		SW Southwest MFP	UC Utility Corridor RMP	WM White Mountains National Recreation Area RMP				
CY Central Yukon RMP	FG Fort Greely RMP	FW Fort Wainwright RMP	40M Fortymile MFP	NW Northwest MFP												
S Steese National Conservation Area RMP	SC Southcentral MFP		SW Southwest MFP	UC Utility Corridor RMP												
WM White Mountains National Recreation Area RMP																

Standard Operating Procedures are documented in:

- *Interagency Standard for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, (Red Book) an annual publication by the Departments of Interior and Agriculture states, references or supplements BLM policy and guidance to perform safe and effective fire and aviation management operations. Available at <http://www.fire.blm.gov/Standards/redbook.htm>
- The *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan (AIWFMP)1998* (<http://fire.ak.blm.gov/>) is the interagency operational reference for fire suppression.
- *Alaska Fire Service Operational Procedures, Policies and Guidelines* (Brown Book) published yearly.

2.3.3e Structures and Sites, Known

In order to prioritize assignment of suppression forces and determine the appropriate actions to be taken within the landscape-scale management option classifications, site designations of **Critical, Full, Avoid** and **Non-sensitive** have been established for structures, cultural and paleontological sites, small areas of high resource value and threatened and endangered species habitat in order for the Field Office staff to give suppression agencies more specific guidance for small sites.

- Sites designated **Critical** and **Full** are to be protected from degradation from fire.
- Sites designated **Avoid** are areas where fire suppression efforts should be avoided and effects from suppression efforts minimized. All aircraft should be restricted from these areas.
- Sites designated as **Non-sensitive** are acknowledged as known to the Field Office staff, but requires no additional suppression efforts or restrictions.

Designations are recorded on the map atlas in the suppression offices and it is the joint responsibility of Field Office and suppression staff to keep the atlas current.

2.4 No Action Alternative

The No Action Alternative describes the wildland fire management direction contained in the existing land use plans. The land use plans contain varying degrees of fire management direction; in some cases, identified timelines have lapsed. That direction is briefly summarized on page 2-6 in **Table 2-2, No Action Alternative, Summary of Fire Management Guidance in Existing Land Use Plans**. A comprehensive itemization of guidance in each land use plan is in Appendix I, Detailed Summary of No Action Alternative.

Under this alternative, wildland fire suppression criteria and operational direction for all BLM-managed lands including those not covered in a land use plan would continue to be defined and applied by agreement in the AIWFMP. Fuels projects would be addressed on a case-by-case basis with appropriate analyses.

Under the No Action Alternative, land use plans would be updated and new RMPs completed based on funding availability and following BLM-Alaska Planning Schedule in Appendix J.

2.5 Preferred Alternative: Land Use Plan Amendment for Wildland Fire and Fuels Management

Under this alternative, all BLM-Alaska land use plans will be amended so that the BLM-Alaska fire management program will implement the National Fire Plan and its components at the first tier of BLM land use planning. Each activity within the fire management program supports identified land use and resource management objectives. Safety is emphasized as the number one priority in all fire management activities. Fire management choices continue to consist of a full range of options that recognize fire is an essential ecological process and natural change agent of Alaskan ecosystems while providing for the protection of human life and site-specific values. Fuels treatments by prescribed fire, manual, or mechanical means are viable management tools.

The Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment provides a consistent approach for integrating wildland fire and fuels management direction into existing RMPs and also will supply interim guidance for BLM-managed lands for which completion of new land use plans is scheduled. The Land Use Plan Amendment is summarized

in *Table 2-3* on pages 2-11 to 2-13 and a detailed matrix by management option describing resource objectives, rationale for assigning option designations, appropriate responses and fuels management guidance is in Appendix K. The Preferred Alternative includes all elements listed under Section 2.3 Management in Common plus the following.

2.5.1 Amendment Goals and Objectives

The BLM manages land within the forestlands, shrublands and herbaceous (tundra and grasslands) vegetative communities. Management of the wildland fire and fuels program will focus on maintaining the key ecosystem components of vegetation composition and structure intact and functioning within their historical range. The fire management program will provide for public and firefighter safety and protection of identified sites and structures from degradation caused by wildland fire.

Fuels management activities are necessary and important resource management tools to accomplish land and resource management objectives where fire has been excluded due to land use and allocation decisions that conflict with the natural role of fire.

In order to be successful, fire management programs must also be economically viable, weighing the values to be protected and the associated costs. Interagency coordination and cooperation are essential to ensuring success and efficiency.

The goals (Section 1.2) and supporting objectives are:

- Protect human life and property. The supporting objectives include:
 - Provide for firefighter and public safety as highest priority in every fire management activity.
 - Provide appropriate protection to BLM physical developments, facilities and administrative sites while balancing costs with value-at-risk.
 - Preserve cultural and paleontological sites⁷

⁷ Cultural resources is an all encompassing term and includes historical, archeological, religious, and other significant sites. For information on cultural resources, see U.S. Department of

- Manage vegetation adjacent to populated areas to reduce risk of wildfires.
- Use wildland fire and fuel treatments to meet resource objectives. The supporting objectives include:
 - Manage vegetation to the appropriate seral stages⁸ to maintain watershed condition, ecosystem health, and habitat conditions for fish and wildlife.
 - Sustain the natural range of variation in plant composition and structure.
 - Sustain the proper functioning condition of riparian areas.⁹
 - Maintain species diversity while decreasing the probability of wildland fires in areas where the land use or resource objective necessitates wildland fire be excluded or minimized.
 - Maintain and protect subsistence uses and needs.
 - Sustain high value natural resources.
 - Maintain visual diversity.
 - Preserve cultural and paleontological sites.
 - Maintain or enhance commercial resource values.
 - Manage for requirements of threatened and endangered (T&E) species' critical habitat, other special status species habitats, and migratory birds.
 - Meet State air and water quality standards.
- Reduce risk and cost of uncontrolled wildland fire through wildland fire use, prescribed fire, manual, or mechanical treatment. The supporting objectives include:

Interior, BLM publication, "America's Priceless Heritage: Cultural and Fossil Resources on Public Lands, Alaska", November 2003. It can be viewed at http://www.blm.gov/heritage/aph_nav_web_low_pdf.htm.

⁸ See Sections 3.2.6 and .7 for discussions on appropriate seral stages for vegetation and for wildlife habitat.

⁹ Of the anadromous stream habitat under BLM management 98% (14,800 miles) is considered to be in natural or near-natural condition. See Section 3.1.2a.

- Reduce risk to life and property.
- Minimize effects of wildland fire in areas where the natural role of fire conflicts with current land use.
- Balance acres burned and values at risk against suppression costs.
- Reduce adverse effects of fire management activities. The supporting objectives include:
 - Prevent damage to cultural resources.
 - Minimize effects of suppression actions.
 - Prevent the introduction or spread of noxious or invasive plants.
 - Safeguard essential fish habitat, T&E species, and all other plant and wildlife habitats.
- Continue interagency collaboration and cooperation. The supporting objectives include:
 - Continue the use of the wildland fire suppression criteria and operational direction in the AIWFMP.
 - Continue membership in the AWFCG¹⁰.
 - Authorize suppression actions or fuel treatments on BLM-managed land to hinder wildland fire from occurring or spreading to higher management option designation on BLM-managed lands, inholdings or those of adjacent landowners.
 - Apply current fire management option classifications¹¹.
 - Use the change protocol issued by AWFCG to modify fire management options designations or boundaries.
 - Support scientific research.
 - Work cooperatively on landscape scale multi-jurisdictional projects.

2.5.2 Management Options

Under the Preferred Alternative, the management criteria defined in Section 2.3 is added to the existing direction in all the land use plans. The following management direction supplements that direction.

¹⁰ See Appendix C for Role of AWFCG and 2004 membership list.

¹¹ Map 3. Fire Management Options for BLM-Managed Lands.

2.5.2a Critical Management Option

The BLM objectives achieved by designating lands Critical are:

- Provide for public safety.
- Provide appropriate protection to inhabited structures and other physical developments.
- Preserve National Historic Landmarks.
- Manage vegetation adjacent to populated areas to reduce risk of wildfires.
- Minimize effects of wildland fire in areas where current land use conflicts with natural role of fire.

The supporting suppression objectives are to suppress 95% of the wildland fires at 5 acres or less and to exclude fire from structures and sites. Under very extraordinary circumstances, as appropriate to the site and situation, wildland fire use for resource benefit may be considered as a management alternative.

The management emphasis in Critical is to work collaboratively with adjacent landowners on community planning, risk assessments, prevention, and mitigation to prevent and exclude wildland fire. Appropriate mitigation measures to reduce the wildland fire risks to life and property and costs of wildland fires in Critical are mechanical and manual fuel treatments that reduce the amount of vegetation (fuel loads) within and around wildland urban interface areas, National Historic Landmarks, and physical developments. Prescribed fire may be used when appropriate for the site and situation (for example, burning slash piles). The anticipated average annual number of acres treated through the fuels program is 25-50 acres.

2.5.2b Full Management Option

The BLM objectives achieved by designating lands Full are:

- Provide appropriate protection to identified uninhabited structures and property including BLM facilities and physical developments.
- Preserve structures and sites on or eligible for National Register of Historic Places.
- Preserve cultural and paleontological sites.
- Minimize effects of wildland fire in areas where current land use conflicts with natural role of fire.
- Maintain species diversity while decreasing the probability of large wildland fires in

areas where land use or resource objectives necessitate wildland fire be excluded or minimized.

- Manage for requirements of T&E species' critical habitat, other special status species habitats, and migratory birds.
- Maintain and protect subsistence uses and needs.
- Maintain or enhance commercial resource values.

The supporting suppression objectives are to suppress 90% of the wildland fires at 50 acres or less and to exclude fire from structures and sites. Under extraordinary circumstances, as appropriate to the site and situation, wildland fire use for resource benefit may be considered as a management alternative.

To reduce the risks and costs of wildland fires, the management emphasis for Full Management Option lands is to minimize the effects of wildland fire by:

- ♦ working collaboratively with adjacent landowners on community planning and risk assessments,
- ♦ completing project proposals based on those assessments,
- ♦ using mitigation measures to maintain low fuel loads and promote healthy productive ecosystems that support the subsistence lifestyle,
- ♦ developing prevention programs as warranted,
- ♦ and maintaining known sites on or eligible for National Register of Historic Places in a viable condition.

The anticipated average annual number of acres treated through the fuels program is 20 acres by manual or mechanical methods and 20,000 acres by prescribed fire.

2.5.2c Limited Management Option

Wildland fire use for resource benefit is the key component of this designation. The BLM objectives achieved by designating lands Limited are:

- Manage vegetation to the appropriate seral stages to maintain watershed condition, ecosystem health, and habitat conditions for fish and wildlife.
- Sustain the natural range of variation in plant composition and structure.

- Sustain the proper functioning condition of riparian areas.
- Maintain and protect subsistence uses and needs.
- Maintain visual diversity.
- Manage for requirements of T&E species' critical habitat, other special status species habitats, and migratory birds.
- Minimize the adverse effects of fire suppression efforts.
- Balance acres burned with values at risk against suppression costs.

The supporting suppression objectives allow the number of fires and annual acres burned to be dependent on weather and vegetation conditions and within the historical fire regime for the vegetation type. Based on historical records, the fire size on approximately 10% of fires occurring on Limited lands would be $\geq 10,000$ acres.

Fuels treatment objectives that assist in balancing acres burned and values at risk and also meet resource objectives are habitat manipulation, reduction of the amount of available fuels and the continuity of fuels, improvement of ecological health, and preservation of cultural and other identified sites. The anticipated average annual acres treated through the fuels program is 1,000 acres by prescribed fire.

2.5.2d Modified Management Option

Wildland fire use for resource benefit and strategies that are based on the annual conversion date are the key components of this designation. The BLM objectives achieved by designating lands Modified are:

- Manage for requirements of T&E species' critical habitat, other special status species habitats, and migratory birds.
- Maintain species diversity while decreasing the probability of large wildland fires in areas where resource objectives necessitate wildland fire be minimized.
- Maintain and protect subsistence uses and needs.
- Maintain visual diversity.
- Moderate the adverse effects of fire suppression efforts.
- Maintain or enhance potential commercial resource values.
- Balance acres burned with values at risk against suppression costs.

**Table 2-3: Preferred Alternative
Summary of the Land Use Plan Amendment for Wildland Fire and Fuels Management**

Wildland Fire Management	Fuels Management
<p>Critical Management Option Lands (Fire is not desired.)</p> <p>Emphasis on protecting human life and inhabited structures, site protection and preventing damage to or loss of cultural sites.</p> <p>Wildland Fire Suppression Direction: Appropriate Management Response: Immediate, continuing aggressive suppression of fires within or threatening designated areas. Highest priority for assigning firefighting resources.</p> <p>Suppression Objectives: 1. Public and firefighter safety. 2. 95% of the fires are suppressed at 5 acres or less. 3. No structures lost.</p> <p>Resource Protection Guidelines: Complete protection of designated sites: Urban Areas or Wildland-Urban Interface Area with permanent residences, and valuable cultural resources, including National Historic Landmarks. Collaborative management with adjacent landowner. Meet National Fire Plan objectives.</p>	<p>Critical Management Option Lands</p> <p>Fuel treatments will be based on community planning and risk assessments and preservation of cultural sites or BLM facilities and physical developments.</p> <p>Anticipated Annual Fuel Treatment Projects: Manual treatment projects: 25-50 average annual acres. Prescribed fire to burn debris resulting from manual treatments.</p> <p>Treatment Methods: 1. Mechanical 2. Manual 3. Prescribed fire to burn debris resulting from manual treatments.</p> <p>As new technology and methods become available, biomass utilization of debris as a result of projects will be considered.</p> <p>Fire management projects may also be developed and implemented in support of scientific research and in cooperation with BLM cooperators and partners.</p>
<p>Full Management Option Lands (Unplanned fire is likely to cause negative effects.)</p> <p>Emphasis on protecting uninhabited structures, site protection and preventing damage to or loss of cultural sites.</p> <p>Wildland Fire Suppression Direction: Same as Critical Option. However, fires occurring in Critical have a higher priority for allocation of suppression resources.</p> <p>Suppression Objectives: 1. Public and firefighter safety. 2. 90% of the fires are suppressed at 50 acres or less. 3. No structures lost.</p>	<p>Full Management Option Lands</p> <p>Fuel treatments will be based on community planning and risk assessments, preservation of cultural sites or BLM facilities and physical developments, or ecosystem health issues.</p> <p>Anticipated Annual Fuel Treatment Projects: Prescribed fire: 20,000 average annual acres. Mechanical treatment: 20 average annual acres.</p> <p>Treatment Methods: 1. Mechanical 2. Manual 3. Prescribed fire</p> <p>As new technology and methods become available, biomass utilization of debris as a result of projects will be considered.</p>

Wildland Fire Management	Fuels Management
<p>Full Management Option Lands continued: Resource Protection Guidelines: Prevent damage or loss of physical developments, structures or sites (BLM administrative sites, cabins, recreation facilities or other BLM physical developments) while balancing cost with value at risk. Minimize damage to natural resources identified for protection commensurate with values at risk. Preserve cultural sites. Protect structures on or eligible for the National Register of Historical Places. Promote healthy productive ecosystems that support the subsistence lifestyle. Meet National Fire Plan objectives.</p>	<p>Full Management Option Lands continued: Fire management projects may also be developed and implemented in support of scientific research and in cooperation with BLM cooperators and partners.</p>
<p>Limited Management Option Lands (Fire is desired.)</p> <p>The key component is wildland fire use for resource benefit. Fires are allowed to burn under the influence of natural forces within predetermined areas to accomplish resource objectives while continuing protection of human life and site-specific values.</p> <p>Wildland Fire Suppression Direction: Appropriate Management Response: Surveillance. Lowest priority for allocation of suppression resources.</p> <p>Suppression Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public and firefighter safety. 2. Site-specific protection as needed. 3. Number of fires and annual acres burned would be dependent on weather and vegetation conditions and be within the historical fire regime for the vegetation type. 4. Keep wildland fires from crossing into Critical, Full or Modified (before conversion) areas. 5. 10% of fires >10,000 acres. <p>Resource Protection Guidelines: Resource benefit of fire in fire-dependent ecosystems. Long term ecological health; Biodiversity. Minimize the anticipated negative effects of suppression efforts. Costs of suppression exceed values at risk. Collaborative management with adjacent landowner. Meet National Fire Plan objectives.</p>	<p>Limited Management Option Lands</p> <p>The key component is wildland fire use for resource benefit.</p> <p>Wildland Fire Use Acres: 130,000 – 180,000 average annual acres</p> <p>Anticipated Annual Fuel Treatment Projects: Prescribed fire: 1,000 average annual acres</p> <p>Treatment Methods:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Mechanical 2. Manual 3. Prescribed fire <p>Treatment objectives that support land use and resource objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Reduce hazards surrounding cultural and other identified sites 2. Reduce fuel loading 3. Break up fuel continuity 4. Manipulate habitat 5. Improve ecological health <p>As technology and methods become available, biomass utilization of debris as a result of projects will be considered.</p> <p>Fire management projects may also be developed and implemented in support of scientific research and in cooperation with BLM cooperators and partners.</p>

Wildland Fire Management	Fuels Management
<p>Modified Management Option Lands (Fire is desired but vegetation condition may imply constraints.)</p> <p>Key components are wildland fire use for resource benefit and strategies based on the conversion date.</p> <p>Wildland Fire Suppression Direction: Appropriate Management Response: Before conversion date: Fires are suppressed based on the availability of resources. Priority is below Full for allocation of suppression resources.</p> <p>After conversion: Surveillance and Wildland Fire Use for Resource Benefit. Fires are allowed to burn under the influence of natural forces within predetermined areas to accomplish resource objectives while continuing protection of human life and site-specific values.</p> <p>Suppression Objectives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Public and firefighter safety. 2. Site-specific protection as needed. 3. Keep wildland fires from crossing into Full or Critical areas. 4. 85% of the fires are suppressed at 750 acres or less. <p>Resource Protection Guidelines: Manage fire size while allowing wildland fire to benefit resources in fire-dependent ecosystems. Appropriate balance of cost and acres burned. Moderate adverse environmental effects of fire suppression activities. Balance of acres burned with suppression costs, values at risk, and the accomplishment of resource management objectives. Maintain historic fire regime to the extent possible. Collaborative management with adjacent landowner. Meet National Fire Plan objectives.</p>	<p>Modified Management Option Lands</p> <p>A key component is wildland fire use for resource benefit.</p> <p>Wildland Fire Use Acres: Acres burned after conversion date plus acres allotted as a result of a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis or Wildland Fire Implementation Plan. Estimates: 20,000 – 40,000 average annual acres</p> <p>Anticipated Annual Fuel Treatment Projects: Prescribed fire: 3,000 average annual acres.</p> <p>Treatment Methods: Same as Limited Management Option areas.</p> <p>Treatment Objectives: Same as Limited Management Option areas.</p> <p>As technology and methods become available, biomass utilization of debris as a result of projects will be considered.</p> <p>Fire management projects may also be developed and implemented in support of scientific research and in cooperation with BLM cooperators and partners.</p>

In Modified the suppression goal is to manage fire size and minimize disturbance to identified habitats during specific time periods while allowing wildland fire to achieve resource objectives. The supporting suppression objective is to suppress 85% of the fires at 750 acres or less.

Before the conversion date, if a deviation from the appropriate management response as defined in Section 2.3.1d is necessary, wildland fire use for resource benefit may be considered as a management alternative. After the conversion date, the wildland fire use is the appropriate management response.

Fuels treatment objectives that assist in balancing acres burned and values at risk and also meet resource objectives are habitat manipulation, reduction of the amount of available fuels and the continuity of fuels, improvement of ecological health, and preservation of cultural and other identified sites. The anticipated average annual acres treated through the fuels program is 3,000 acres by prescribed fire.

2.5.3 Management Option Designation Review and Changes

In addition to the requirements in Section 2.3.2, extensive fire activity in a single year or multi-year incidents within the same hydrologic unit also triggers the need to initiate an interagency review for that unit. Reviews on a collaborative, interagency level after extensive fire activity are encouraged to ensure management option designations are still meeting all land managers' land use and resource objectives. The effects noted by Native villagers adjacent to or within the area should be weighed in management option reviews.

2.5.4 Stabilization and Rehabilitation

Short-term stabilization is the responsibility of the team assigned to fire suppression. On large-scale fires, a stabilization and rehabilitation plan, approved by the Field Office Authorized Officer must be completed before the final demobilization occurs. Standard operating procedures listed in Sections 2.3 and 2.5 are applicable.¹²

¹² Also see Wildland Fire Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Policy and Procedures found in Department of Interior

Long-term needs will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Key indicators include severity of burn, permafrost layer affected, erosion potential, soil profile, percent of hydrological unit burned, extensive multi-year fire activity in the same area, vegetation type, threat of introduction and spread of noxious or invasive plants, T&E and special status species' habitats adjacent to or affected, the riparian areas involved, and subsistence issues.

2.5.5 Procedures, Restrictions and Constraints

The following apply to all fire management activities within all management options classifications and are in addition to those listed in Section 2.3.3.

2.5.5a Standard Operating Procedures

The documents listed in Section 2.3.3d are incorporated here by reference and to further reduce fire management effects, the following mitigation measures were identified during the analysis completed for Chapter 3 and are to be implemented:

- Use of tracked or off-road vehicles (for example, bulldozers or all-terrain vehicles) requires written authorization by the Field Office Authorized Officer and will be approved on a case-by-case basis prior to use. Stipulations in the authorization will address use of equipment to avoid line construction near streams where it may cause erosion, damage to riparian areas, harm cultural or paleontological resources, degrade water quality or fish habitat, or contribute to stream channel sedimentation.
- Use of aerial fire retardant near lakes, wetlands, streams, rivers, sources of human water consumption, and areas adjacent to water sources should be avoided to protect fish habitat and water quality. If feasible in these areas, the use of water rather than retardant is preferred. When the use of retardant is necessary, avoid aerial or ground application of retardant or foam within 300 feet of a waterway; application beyond 500

Manual 620; BLM WO IM No. 2003-221 and No. 2003-221 Change 1, and No. 2004-065 Use of the Categorical Exclusions for Hazardous Fuels Treatments and Post-Fire Rehabilitation Projects.

feet is preferred. Examples of when use of retardant is authorized are for the protection of :

- o Human life.
- o Permanent year-around residences.
- o National Historic land marks.
- o Structures on or eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
- o Government Facilities.
- o Sites or structures designated by Field Office resource specialists to be protected.
- o High value resources on BLM-managed lands and those of adjacent land owners.
- o Threatened, endangered and sensitive species habitats as identified by resource specialist.
- Avoid the introduction of invasive plants or non-native plants by pursuing the use of seed-free equipment and supplies, and maintaining clean personal gear.
- Establish Riparian Buffer Zones appropriate to the site characteristics to sustain the proper functioning conditions of the area by protecting stream banks, minimizing compaction of soil, preventing stream sedimentation, and protecting water quality.
- Rehabilitate fire and dozer lines by spreading original soil and vegetation on the disturbed ground. In extreme cases where seeding or plugging may be necessary, use native vegetation and seeds. A rehabilitation plan should be developed by the suppression forces working with BLM Field Office wildlife biologists and botanists.

2.5.5b Structures, Unknown

When a structure is discovered during fire management activities, the Field Office representative will be notified immediately. Under normal circumstances during suppression operations, the BLM is not responsible for and will not provide protection to unauthorized structures unless they meet one or more of the following criteria:

- It is necessary to preserve structures to save human life.
- The structure is evaluated and determined to be eligible for consideration for the National Register of Historic Places. (See Appendix L, BLM Policy for Cabin/Structure Protection)

2.5.6 Monitoring for Cumulative Effects

Vegetative communities will be monitored for the cumulative effects of wildland fire, suppression actions, and the effects of excluding fire from the landscape, as funding permits, to evaluate best management practices when BLM-managed lands:

- Are adjacent to or included as part of a fire that is 200,000 acres or larger.
- Are contained in a hydrologic unit (Level 4) 25% of which has burned in a 25 year period.
- Include areas where fire has been excluded or minimized¹³. Every 10 years the vegetation composition and structure will be examined to determine if it is meeting the resource objectives of the area. Fuel treatment projects and fire management options changes may be recommended.
- Include areas where extensive suppression actions, including retardant and heavy equipment use, have occurred.
- Include areas of concern for specific resources. Monitoring may be initiated on any fire by the Field Office resource specialist to determine the impacts of wildland fire.¹⁴

All monitoring and suggested management changes will be documented and retained in the appropriate field office database. Other affected land managers including representatives from Native villages adjacent to or within the area will be invited to collaborate in evaluation.

2.5.7 Fuels Management

The complete exclusion of wildland fires is not realistically feasible. In areas where the objective is to exclude fire or minimize fire size, vegetation manipulation by various methods is a resource management tool to safeguard identified sites and maintain species diversity. Projects are

¹³ Lands designed Critical, Full and potentially Modified management option.

¹⁴ For example, when considering caribou winter range, Alaska Department of Fish and Game suggest if >5% burns in an extreme fire year, consideration be given to greater suppression vigilance in the next decade within that defined area. See Section 3.2.7b.

designed with regard to site characteristics and the reproductive characteristics of the plant species present on the site. Projects are approved and funded on a case-by-case basis.

Fuels Management will assist in achieving the objectives stated under each management option classification. Projects may also be developed and implemented in support of scientific research and in cooperation with BLM cooperators and partners.

2.5.7a Priorities

Fuels treatments are prioritized to:

1. Reduce the risk to human life and inhabited property.
2. Reduce the risk and cost of fire suppression in areas of hazardous fuels buildup.
3. Achieve other resource objectives.

Treatments around communities would be prioritized based on community planning and risk assessments. The top priority for fuel treatments will be those communities surrounded by vegetation in Condition Class 2 and 3.¹⁵

2.5.7b Treatments Methods

Treatments listed below are implemented based on funding availability and after required site-specific analyses, including the appropriate NEPA¹⁶ documentation, have been completed. The following methods are used in Alaska. A detailed description of each treatment is in Appendix H.

- Prescribed Burning¹⁷

¹⁵ See Appendix G for definitions of Condition Classes and <http://www.frc.gov/> for additional information on Fire Regime and Condition Class.

¹⁶ Federal Register Notice 33824, Vol. 68, No. 108, Thursday, June 5, 2003 contains the Categorical Exclusion for Fuels Projects; See BLM WO IM No. 2003-221, 221 Change 1 and 2004-065 Information BLM Use of the Categorical Exclusions for Hazardous Fuels Treatments and Post-Fire Rehabilitation Projects.

¹⁷ BLM Office of Fire and Aviation (OF&A) IM No. 2004-003 Prescribed Fire Management for BLM guidance. The IM also contains additional prescribed fire references.

- Mechanical
- Manual

The total anticipated average annual acreage for fuels treatment by Manual or Mechanical methods is 50 acres.

The total anticipated average annual acreage for fuels treatment by Prescribed Fire is 24,000 acres.

As new technology and methods become available, biomass utilization of debris as a result of projects will be considered.

2.5.7c Wildland Fire Use (WFU)

WFU is the management of wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives in pre-defined geographic areas. In Alaska, WFU is reported by the Fuels Program and implemented through the fire suppression program. The anticipated average annual acreage reported for wildland fire use is equivalent to the anticipated acres burned by lightning-caused fires on Limited and Modified Management Option lands: 150,000 to 200,000 acres.

2.6 Comparison of the No Action Alternative to the Preferred Alternative

Table 2-4 on pages 2-17 and 18 summarizes the differences between the two Alternatives.

2.7 Alternative Considered but Eliminated from Detailed Study

Have each Field Office amend each of its land use plans individually. This alternative was eliminated due to the redundant workload in each Field Office. It will be more efficient and cost-effective to complete one amendment applicable to all plans.

Table 2.4: Comparison of the Alternatives

No Action (Existing Land Use Plan Direction)	Preferred (Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment)
<p>Wildland Fire Suppression Direction:</p> <p>Fire management options were provided in two RMPS. Four other RMPs “adopted” the same fire management options by reference to the statewide agreement developed cooperatively by State, Federal, and private landowners.</p> <p>Six other planning areas and additional lands outside plans did not have direction for fire management.</p> <p>Five plans provide for change of suppression designations with changes in land use; annual review and modification.</p> <p>Two plans indicated that there were no areas where suppression is required to protect natural resources.</p> <p>Three plans designate inhabited cabins and commercial facilities as critical sites and first priority for suppression.</p>	<p>Wildland Fire Suppression Direction:</p> <p>Management Options for suppression are applied on all BLM-managed lands through Land Use Plans and Amendment planning analysis:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical (147,500 acres, total, in all planning areas) Full (7 million acres, total, in all planning areas) Limited (66 million acres, total, in all planning areas) Modified (12 million acres, total, in all planning areas) <p>Options may be modified in the future through the collaborative process contained in the interagency agreement (AIWFMP), appropriate NEPA documentation, and amendment or maintenance of the land use plan.</p> <p>Anticipated Annual Average Occurrence for Wildland Fire is noted. Appropriate management response is defined.</p> <p>Standard operating procedures, restrictions and constraints are noted; mitigation measures as a result of environmental assessment are identified</p>
<p>Fuels Management Direction:</p> <p>Use of prescribed fire to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. break up continuous fuels (3 plans) 2. improve wildlife habitat (8 plans) 3. increase vegetation diversity (6 plans) 4. hazardous to structures (1 plan) 5. reduce fire hazards (2 plans) <p>: Mechanical treatment directed by one plan (no acreage). Specific direction, for prescribed fire by three plans (≥60,000 acres). (Targeted timelines have lapsed.)</p> <p>General direction for constraints in burn plans in one MFP.</p>	<p>Fuels Management Direction:</p> <p>Specific decisions regarding vegetation treatment are general in existing plans, and are not vacated by this amendment. In several cases, as noted in this comparison, plans direct prescribed fire or mechanical treatment based upon good science.</p> <p>For all BLM-managed lands, objectives, treatment methods, priorities and levels of activity are linked to Management Option designations. Mechanical, manual, and prescribed fire allowed in all planning areas under all management options, except for limitations placed on Critical Option areas.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Average Annual Acreage for Manual or Mechanical Treatments: 50 acres Average Annual Acreage for Prescribed Fire: 24,000 acres <p>That the key component of Limited and Modified (after conversion) areas is the use of wildland fire to achieve objectives is reaffirmed. Wildland fire use is</p>

No Action (Existing Land Use Plan Direction)	Preferred (Proposed Land Use Plan Amendment)
	<p>permitted as an Wildland Fire Situation Analysis alternative for other management option classifications if a wildland fire escapes initial attack. Wildland Fire Use Annual Average Acres: 150,000 -200,000</p> <p>Biomass utilization is encouraged; projects may be developed to support research or in cooperation with partners.</p>
<p>Resource Protection Guidelines:</p> <p>One plan allowed fire to occur under prescribed (but unspecified) conditions.</p> <p>Two plans indicated inventory or monitoring of fuel types, natural barriers, fire succession, or wildfire for the benefit of limited action and prescribed fire to document achievement of wildlife goals.</p> <p>Three plans required protection of cultural resources.</p> <p>One plan prioritized a natural fire occurrence (mosaic), where other important resources values would not be harmed. Fires should be < 10,000 acres.</p> <p>Two plans protect or enhance areas of crucial wildlife habitat for moose, caribou, or sensitive, threatened, and endangered plants, animals, and their habitat.</p> <p>One plan specified protection of commercial timber stands.</p> <p>One plan indicated maintaining watershed cover in healthy condition through use of natural or prescribed fire.</p> <p>Direction to develop and implement a fire management plan in one MFP, and two RMPs.</p>	<p>Resource Protection Guidelines:</p> <p>Existing plan-specific decisions regarding resource protection are general in existing plans, and are not vacated by this amendment.</p> <p>Public and firefighter safety is incontrovertibly identified as the number one priority in all fire and fuels management activities.</p> <p>Fire and fuels management direction for all BLM-managed lands is addressed uniformly at the first tier of BLM land use plans.</p> <p>Resources goals and objectives to be achieved by wildland fire and fuels management are identified and linked to management option designations.</p> <p>Protection is required in all planning areas for: improvements, such as pipeline pump station facilities, BLM campgrounds, administrative sites, designated structures and cultural sites.</p> <p>Requirements of T&E species, Special Status species, migratory birds and other fish and wildlife habitats are met through management option designations and standard operating procedures.</p> <p>BLM has the option of enhancement or manipulation of vegetation to improve habitat for species identified during the planning process for all planning areas. For example caribou and moose in various areas may require different habitat actions related to wildland fire and vegetation treatment.</p> <p>All plans specify post wildland fire monitoring.</p>