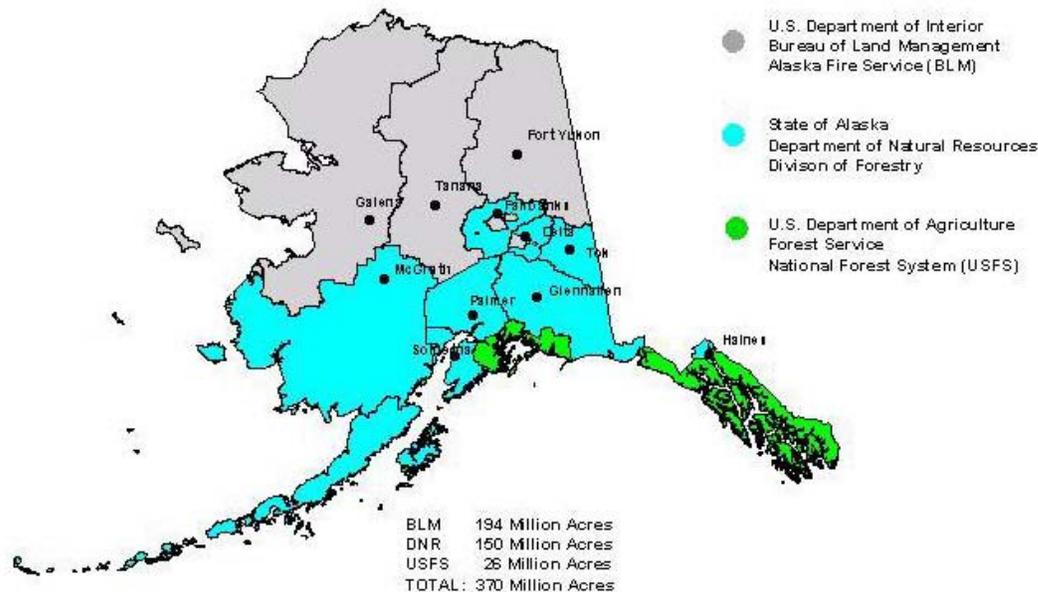


Appendix B Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan 1998

In Alaska, three agencies are tasked with wildland fire suppression responsibilities. The Bureau of Land Management (Alaska Fire Service), the State of Alaska, and the U. S. Forest Service respond to all wildland fires within their respective protection areas regardless of land ownership or agency management. Landowners/managers are notified by the suppression agencies when wildland fires occur on their lands.

Alaska Wildland Fire Protection Areas



These agencies have a single reference for operational decision: the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan 1998 (AIWFMP). It provides landowner/managers with four management options that indicate the initial strategy for suppression operations on their lands: Critical, Full, Limited and Modified. The goals and objectives for wildland fire management, extended operations, general suppression guidelines and constraints, and program review requirements are also addressed in the plan. Guiding principles outlined in the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review, dated December 18, 1995, are embodied in the AIWFMP; firefighter and public safety is stressed as the highest priority in all wildland fire activities.

The AIWFMP affirms that:

- Lightning caused wildland fires are an important component of the boreal forest and arctic tundra ecosystems, and the complete exclusion of these fires is neither ecologically sound nor economically feasible.
- In the Southeastern Alaska coastal forest, lightning caused wildland fire is not ecologically significant. People cause the majority of the fires while undertaking logging operations and recreational activities in the coastal forest.
- The natural role of fire in the environment must be tempered by the need to protect human life and health, private property, developments, and certain valued natural and cultural resources.
- During the fire season availability of suppression resources may become limited due to commitments on numerous initial attack assignments and/or large fires.

- The pre-fire season assignment of management options establishes priorities for allocation of suppression forces and substantially improves the cost-effectiveness of wildland fire management.
- Non-standard responses become necessary when situations such as unusual burning conditions, critical shortages of suppression resources, or human safety and health issues arise. These responses occur rarely and are limited to specific instances and specific geographic locations. A convened Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) group or the involved fire suppression organization and land manager/owner(s) will document all non-standard responses.
- Well-trained, well-equipped, and adequately funded suppression forces are essential to maintain public safety and public confidence in the fire management programs, and to provide cost effective suppression while recognizing the role of fire in Alaska ecosystems.
- Pre-suppression efforts, such as fuel break construction and prescribed fires for hazard fuel reduction will reduce the potential threat to human life and private property, and help meet fire-related land and resource management objectives to reduce fire suppression expenditures on adjacent lands.

The suppression agencies routinely report to the land management agencies the status of wildland fires on their lands. A report is completed for each fire; each status report includes the date and time the information was gathered, the size of the fire, pattern and direction of growth, perimeter maps, weather conditions at the fire site, fire behavior and burning intensity, location and description of nearby sites of high value, adjacent land ownership and management designations, and suppression forces committed. Ongoing dialogues through the fire season keep the land managers informed of all wildland fires on their lands and/or burning toward their land.

The management option specifies the initial response to a wildland fire. The AIWFMP directs land managers and suppression agencies to the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) process for the analysis of and decisions regarding the management objectives, the extent of commitment of forces, various tactics and strategies, and reviews cost associated with continuing suppression actions for fires in Critical, Full and Modified (before conversion) that have not been controlled or extinguished by initial attack forces. The WFSA is also used as a decision-making tool for wildland fires in Modified (after conversion) and Limited when suppression actions other than surveillance are necessary.

Under the AIWFMP, prescribed fire is a fire management tool to be applied under each agency's regulations, policy and procedures.

Suppression agencies and land managers work together to identify current land use patterns and resource management objectives for each agency's lands. Each land owner/manager is requested to review annually their designated options to determine if those designations meet up-to-date land use and agency direction and policy. A process to change management option designations is in place and that provides the land manager the opportunity to implement a full range of actions from aggressive suppression to monitoring in order to protect human life, sustain healthy ecosystems, maintain natural resource values, accomplish resource management objectives and comply with individual agency requirements. The Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group is responsible for the management, amendment and revision of the AIWFMP.

The AIWFMP provides a mechanism for a strong interagency commitment to effective fire management. It has led to a standardization of policies and procedures across agency boundaries and a close cooperation between BLM AFS and its partners