

Appendix D Interagency Fire Management Planning

The Alaska Land Use Council was created by Section 1201 of the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act (ANILCA) 1980. Its intent was “to serve as a forum for managers of public lands within Alaska and for governmental decision makers with differing perspectives and varying mandates with respect to land management of Alaska’s land resources.” (Alaska Land Use Council Annual Report 1982) During the 1980s, the Council supported the planning efforts that resulted in the original interagency fire management plans. With participation by State, federal and Alaska Native representatives, the first Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan was completed and approved in 1982; 12 more plans were completed and implemented by 1988. The Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plans for each of the following planning units¹ provided statewide land managers with wildland fire strategy choices and provided operational direction to the suppression agencies:

- Arctic Slope Planning Area 1986
- Copper Basin Planning Area 1983
- Fortymile Planning Area 1984
- Kenai Planning Area 1984
- Kobuk Planning Area 1984
- Kodiak/Alaska Peninsula Planning Area 1986
- Kuskokwim/Illiamna Planning Area 1983
- Matanuska/Susitna Planning Area 1986
- Seward/Koyukuk Planning Area 1984
- Southeast Planning Area 1988
- Tanana/Minchumina Planning Area 1982 and Amendment 1984
- Upper Yukon/Tanana Planning Area 1984
- Yukon/Togiak Planning Area 1984

Fire was recognized as a key environmental factor in Alaska’s cold-dominated ecosystems, and the plans contain a full range of suppression alternatives (management options). The assignment of fire management options determines the proper level for the initial suppression response and sets priorities for responses when suppression resources are limited. Those assignments are determined by the land manager and are implemented by the fire suppression organizations. These plans were developed through the collaborative efforts of interagency, interdisciplinary teams and applied on a statewide, interagency, multi-jurisdictional, landscape scale. Public input was solicited throughout the State.

In 1998, under the Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group, the planning process was completed when the common elements of each plan were incorporated into a single reference document for operational decisions: the *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan* (AIWFMP)². The AIWFMP continues the requirement for an annual, pre-season land manager/owner review of the fire protection needs on lands under their management authority. Once fire protection needs are determined, the lands are placed in Critical, Full, Modified, or Limited management option. Option selections are based on land manager/owner(s) values to be protected as well as land and resource management objectives. The fire management strategies selected vary from initial attack and sustained suppression efforts in the critical and full management areas to surveillance in the limited management areas. This categorization and ensuing prioritization ensures that: (1) human life, private property, and identified resources receive an appropriate level of protection with available firefighting resources, (2) the cost of the suppression effort is commensurate with values identified for protection, and (3) the ability of land manager/owner(s) to achieve their individual management objectives is optimized.

On the national level, the events of the 1994 wildland fire season created a renewed awareness and concern about the impacts of fire and firefighter safety among the Federal land management agencies, State land

¹ See Map 5. Alaska Interagency Fire Management Planning Units

² Appendix B is a synopsis of the AIWFMP and its implementation.

management agencies and their constituents. As a result of these concerns, the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review was chartered to ensure that Federal policies and cohesive interagency and intergovernmental fire management programs exist. Guiding principles outlined in the Final Report of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review, dated December 18, 1995, are embodied in the AIWFMP.

From the development of the first interagency fire management plan to the current AIWFMP, the interagency fire management plans have proven to be an effective operational tool for both suppression organizations and land managers.