

**Department Order: 113**

**Title: Fire Management Policy**

**Original Date Signed: September 25, 1985**

**Original Author: Esther C. Wunnicke**

**Status: Reconfirmed**

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**By: Harry A. Noah**

To provide the most cost effective approach to the suppression of forest fires within the State of Alaska and to minimize the impact on our scheduled workload when an increased work force is required, suppression organizations are organized to share their regular work force during periods of above-normal fire activity.

This interagency nature of the Fire Management Program necessitates clarification of the Division of Forestry's functional responsibility with

1. other DNR divisions and
2. other State departments.

Each division has specific responsibilities; however, it is the responsibility of the Division of Forestry to oversee and control, on behalf of the Department, the fire protection obligation for all State and private lands in coordination with federal and local fire suppression agencies. Management control of the State suppression fund and pre-suppression costs, coupled with the legal liability associated with discretionary decisions made during the course of wildfire management activities, require that the Division of Forestry retain authority for "immediate decision-making" in field response and cost control. For these reasons, through this Department Order, I am designating the Division of Forestry as the lead organization to represent our Department's management goals relative to fire management activities.

The following organizational responsibilities are hereby established, superseding prior Department Orders on this subject:

**Division of Forestry**

1. The Division shall be the focal point for all fire-management-related issues involving DNR and other divisions, departments, and agencies to assure program consistency.
2. The Division has lead responsibility in the development of Interagency Fire Management plans in State Government. The State Forester shall have the authority to commit the Department on Interagency Fire Management Plans. This effort shall include:

- a. Collating input from DNR divisions. Mitigate differences in objectives as necessary to retain suppression program feasibility and integrity.
  - b. Providing staff support to planning team organizations.
3. The Division will serve as the focal point between the State of Alaska and federal agencies in the development and administration of cooperative suppression agreements, including operational liaison on project fire issues.
4. The Division shall provide technical expertise in the development of prescribed burning programs and shall supply the professional work force to perform this activity consistent with other Department and Division priorities.
5. The Division shall conduct all activities associated with wild land fire suppression and shall be responsible for presuppression and suppression expenditures in that regard.

### **Divisions Of Land & Water Management And Parks And Outdoor Recreation.**

These Divisions also have special responsibilities, and shall be responsible to provide input into the development of fire management plans for their respective areas of land management concern. In that respect they shall:

- a. Supply the necessary resource data to formulate visual display of those resources requiring protection.
- b. Input recommendations on protection level requirements.
- c. Interface interagency fire planning development with existing and on-going area plans developed by the Division of Land & Water Management. Protection level determination will consider pending and final alternatives and be modified as necessary to be responsive to land-use designations. Conversely, the Division of Forestry will evaluate the impact of proposed land-use allocation alternatives on the Protection Program.

In those areas where there is no on-going area plan to interface with fire plan development, those State agencies with primary land management authority shall participate directly in the fire plan's development. The Division of Forestry shall seek concurrence from these land managers in the final draft of the fire plan. Every effort will be made to secure this concurrence but, if agreement cannot be reached, the Division of Forestry will be responsible for the final decision. Appeals to these decisions can be made through normal procedures to the Commissioner.

### **All Divisions**

The Division of Forestry has identified the minimum work force and skill level for 'average-year' suppression activity. To maintain access for cooperator assistance from other suppression agencies nation-wide during heavy fire occurrence periods, the Division has adopted the National Incident Command System (ICS). This arrangement mandates conversion to established standards of organization, performance, and safety. To relieve DNR of the burden of a heavy training workload, the Department will normally rely on federal agency support for overhead during above-normal fire activity. DNR personnel outside the Division of Forestry will be used in limited circumstances and, normally, only in positions that do not require additional training to comply with new qualification requirements. Examples include

positions such as dispatch and warehouse support. This is a departure from prior Division of Forestry and Department policy, reflecting the difficulty in continuing to use non-trained or partially trained department personnel for such services when other demands are placed on their time.

An increased use of Federal cooperator personnel will occur because of this change in policy. However, DNR personnel with valid fire qualifications and experience who wish to participate in fire assignments may do so in the future by forwarding their names and qualifications THROUGH THEIR DIVISION DIRECTORS to the Division of Forestry. The submission MUST INCLUDE AUTHORIZATION FROM THE DIRECTOR indicating that the individual will be made available promptly when called AND that an absence from normal work responsibilities can be assured for as many as 14 days, if required by field needs.

Article referenced at:

<http://www.dnr.state.ak.us/int/commis/dos/do113.htm>