

## **Bureau of Land Management Alaska Remote Structure Protection Policy**

This attachment provides guidance to the Alaska Fire Service (AFS) and the Alaska Department of Natural Resources-Division of Forestry (DOF), as appropriate, concerning remote cabin/structure protection priorities in relation to wildland fire monitoring and suppression activities on lands managed by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) in Alaska. This policy recognizes that availability of resources may preclude protection of some sites indicated for protection during portions of the fire season. The following is guidance for determining and documenting protection status as well as priority for protection:

1. Public and firefighter safety is the number one priority regardless of the valuation of the structure. The safety of the public and fire suppression personnel will remain the first priority when fire suppression/protection decisions are made.
2. The BLM will provide protection of structures on BLM lands using the following guidelines, in priority order:
  - a. If there is an imminent threat to human life and preservation of the structure is needed to eliminate the threat.
  - b. If the structure has been evaluated and is on or has been determined to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.
  - c. If the structure has not been evaluated or considered eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places and has the potential to be, the Evaluating Structures for Historic Value process (see below) will be initiated and suppression action will be initiated as necessary based on the potential.
  - d. If the structure is a federal facility and public funds have been expended in the construction and/or maintenance of the structure, the Field Office Manager or their designee will establish priorities based on their monetary value. If the cost of suppression activity outweighs the monetary cost of the structure the Field Office Manager or their designee will make the decision whether or not to provide suppression efforts.
3. Field Offices will initiate actions to reduce hazardous fuels adjacent to federal facilities, as well as other structures that have been identified for protection. Funds will be secured by the benefitting activity.
4. An unauthorized structure or improvement, including abandoned mines, will be evaluated by Field Office personnel. If deemed to be unsafe or low priority, they will be left unprotected by suppression personnel.
5. Decisions made pursuant to this policy will be recorded on the digital fire map atlas (Known Sites Database). Keeping the fire maps current is a joint responsibility of the Field Office and the AFS/DOF Fire Management Officers (FMO). Changes in fire maps should be incorporated into the annual Fire Management Plan and Annual Operating Plan review process.
6. In the permitting process for approved structures and improvements, the BLM will specify whether providing fire protection is in the best interest of the government and the fire map atlas (Known Sites Database) will be updated at the time the permit is issued to reflect that determination.
7. If the information on the fire map atlas (Known Sites Database) is not sufficient for a decision on protection to be made by the FMO, the FMO will contact the Field Office

Manager or designee for a decision. The decision will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the appropriate resource specialist(s) and Field Office Manager.

### **Evaluating Structures for Historic Value**

#### The Normal Situation

The current database will be kept updated with current information, including protection standards for structures based in part on an assessment of their historic value. Part of this historic assessment will be a determination of whether the structure is eligible to be on the National Register of Historic Places, a decision that is arrived at in consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) in exactly the same fashion as we do for other activities.

Sites will be designated for full protection unless they have been determined to not be eligible to be on the National Register.

#### In a Wildfire Situation

In a wildfire situation, it may be necessary to determine appropriate levels of protection for structures whose eligibility to be on the National Register has not been determined, or it may be necessary to provide priorities among structures designated for full or critical protection. In those cases, the following process will be followed. All decisions that are based on this process will be documented and submitted to the Field Office Manager or their designee.

1. When a qualified cultural resource specialist is available:
  - a) The qualified cultural resource specialist will evaluate structures to determine if they appear to have sufficient historic value to warrant protection. The specialist will also assign relative value to multiple structures so that resources can be concentrated on the sites determined to have the highest priority<sup>1</sup>.
  - b) If time and circumstances allow, the cultural resource specialist will arrive at determinations of historic value after an on-site visit to the structure(s).<sup>2</sup>
2. If circumstances do not allow for an on-site visit by a cultural resource specialist, the determination will be made by the cultural resource specialist on the basis of the best available information.
  - a) If AFS/DOF personnel can get to the site, they should obtain the following information for use by the cultural resource specialist:
    - photograph(s)
    - number of structures
    - conditions of structures (collapsed, standing, ruin)

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<sup>1</sup> If the home Field Office cultural resource specialist is not available, attempts will be made to contact a cultural resource specialist from another Field Office or the State Office to provide assistance.

<sup>2</sup> All *known* historic structures on FDO lands have already been visited and recorded by cultural resource specialists, and all of that information is available in hard copy site folders *and* electronically to the FMO.

- construction materials (logs, plywood, sheet metal)
  - associated features (bottle/can dumps, equipment)
- b) The Fire Personnel Building and Cabin Recording form (Attached below) should be used to collect common standard data (or use the Known Sites Data collection form available at <http://nifc.maps.arcgis.com/home/index.html>).
3. Once information has been gathered regarding the structures being evaluated during a wildfire situation, the protection status and priorities will be made after communication with the SHPO if time and circumstances allow.
- a) If circumstances do not allow for communication with the SHPO, a determination of historic value will be made by the cultural resource specialist.
4. When a qualified cultural resource specialist is not available:
- a) Historic evaluations will be made by the District fire management personnel in consultation with the Field Office Manager or designee.
- b) Training will be provided to the BLM fire management personnel to allow them to make these evaluations. The details and extent of this training will be determined by the FMO and Field Office cultural resource specialist(s).
5. If the Field Office Manager or their designee cannot be contacted and other options are not available, evaluations can be made by AFS/DOF personnel on site. The following is meant to provide some guidance in making these evaluations.
- a) An older structure is probably more important than a younger one. Several characteristics of structures can be used to estimate relative age, such as the state of collapse; construction materials (logs vs. plywood); vegetation regrowth around the structure; and associated artifacts (wagon vs. 1934 Dodge)
- b) A settlement, meaning a site with multiple dwelling structures, is probably more important than a single structure.
- c) A site with a single dwelling structure and associated outbuildings, such as barns, sheds, outhouses or caches, is probably more important than an isolated structure.
- d) A site with associated non-structural features, such as can or bottle dumps is probably more important than one without.

**FIRE PERSONNEL BUILDING AND CABIN RECORDING FORM**  
**(\* Data Required for Known Sites Database)**

Temporary Field ID Number, Name or Label (\*Descriptive Name):

\_\_\_\_\_

GPS Coordinates (lat. & long.): \_\_\_\_\_

Generalized Location (\*Site Notes) info (e.g., creek, river, lake):

\_\_\_\_\_

Recorded by (\*Assessed By): \_\_\_\_\_

Date (\*Assessed Date): \_\_\_\_\_

**BASIC SITE DESCRIPTION INFORMATION:**

Number of Buildings at Site (\*Main Structure Count and Other Structure Count):

\_\_\_\_\_

Building 1 Construction (circle 1 (\*Structure Notes)): Log Cabin or Framed Lumber  
or Other

If "Other", describe: \_\_\_\_\_

Building 1 Condition (circle 1 (\*Structure Condition)): Standing or Collapsing or  
Collapsed

(If more than 1 building, repeat the above information on the back of this sheet)

Other associated features at the site (bottle/can dumps; outhouses; boilers or other equipment  
(\*Structure Notes)):

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**DIGITAL PHOTOGRAPHS (please take many photos):**

Whose camera? \_\_\_\_\_

Photo numbers: \_\_\_\_\_