

Summary of 2020 Master Agreement and Operating Plan Changes

Alaska Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Agreement

The purpose of the Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Agreement (hereinafter called the Master Agreement) is to document the commitment of the Parties to this Agreement (BLM – Alaska, NPS – Alaska, BIA – Alaska, USFWS – Alaska, USFS – Region 10, and the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources) to improve efficiency by facilitating the coordination and exchange of personnel, equipment, supplies, services, and funds among the Parties to this Agreement in sustaining wildland fire management activities, such as prevention, preparedness, communication and education, fuels treatment and hazard mitigation, fire planning, response strategies, tactics and alternatives, suppression and post-fire rehabilitation and restoration.

The Master Agreement will also be the basis from which the DOI agencies implement DOI Manual 620 (620 DM); the USFS implements Forest Service Manual 5100; and the State of Alaska, Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry implements its Policy and Procedures Manuals. The Master Agreement does not supersede individual agency policies and requirements.

In addition to improving efficiency in addressing wildland fire management activities, the Master Agreement facilitates improved coordination regarding other incidents. The National Response Framework (NRF) applies to all federal departments and agencies that may be requested to provide assistance or conduct operations during all-hazard events. However, this Master Agreement **ONLY** covers all-hazard events that are, or may become, declared as emergencies or major disasters that occur under the auspices of a Presidential Declaration of Emergency or Major Disaster under the Stafford Act, which may include wildland fire and non-wildland fire emergencies or major disasters. These events also require a coordinated response by an appropriate combination of state and tribal entities, along with the Federal Agencies.

The Master Agreement documents the commitment of the Parties to provide cooperation, resources, and support to the Secretary of Homeland Security and Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) in the implementation of the NRF, as appropriate and consistent with their own authorities and responsibilities.

The Master Agreement is based on a National template that was updated in 2018. It is signed at the Regional/State Director level of the Parties to the Agreement. A summary of changes from 2015 to 2020 includes:

- Eliminated redundant and not applicable authorities to more closely align with template. Deviations from the template we chose to retain include ANCSA, ANILCA, and the State of Alaska Statutes.
- Updated DOI regional references to Interior Region 11 to align with the departmental reorganization.
- Removed Unit Fire Management Plans from the hierarchy and precedence of agreements and operating plans as they are internal plans outside of the scope of this agreement.
- Renumbered clauses to align with template.
- Removed the inactive DOI Alaska Fire Committee from the Coordinating Groups clause.
- Aligned the Operating Plan clause with the template.

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- Aligned the Coordination Center and Interagency Resources clauses with the template and moved Alaska-specific direction to the Operating Plan.
- Moved Alaska-specific descriptions of Protecting and Jurisdictional roles and fiscal responsibility from the Recitals section to the Protection Planning, Protection Areas and Boundaries, and Methods of Fire Protection and Suppression clauses.
- Aligned the Closest Forces clause with the template.
- Corrected the Escaped Prescribed Fire clause to accurately reflect fiscal responsibility in Alaska.
- Amended the Response to Wildland Fire clause to reflect Alaska response considerations and processes.
- Moved Alaska-specific direction from Delegation of Authority and Preservation of Evidence clauses to Operating Plan.
- Amended Cost Share clause to reflect Alaska apportionment processes.
- Added a Freedom of Information Act clause to align with template.
- Corrected the Accident Investigations clause to reflect proper notification processes.
- Aligned Exhibit D: Reimbursable Billings and Payments with the template

Alaska Statewide Operating Plan

The Alaska Statewide Operating Plan is applicable to all signatory Parties of the Alaska Master Agreement. It is signed at the State or Regional Fire Management Officer level of the Parties to the Agreement. Its purpose is to address statewide issues affecting cooperation, interagency working relationships and protocols, financial arrangements, sharing of resources, and joint activities/projects.

The Operating Plan provides statewide detail to the Master Agreement. It is reviewed and updated annually. The Alaska Mobilization Guide and the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan are incorporated into the Alaska Statewide Operating Plan by reference.

There were few substantive changes in the Operating Plan between 2019 and 2020. A summary of changes includes:

- The document was reorganized and reformatted to align with the national template.
- The document was re-titled as an “Operating Plan” instead of an “Annual Operating Plan” in order to align with the template. There is still intent to review and update the Operating Plan annually.
- Additional detail regarding Interagency Dispatch Centers was provided in order to align with the template.
- Some Alaska-specific direction was moved from the Master Agreement to the Operating Plan (see above) in order to improve Master Agreement alignment with the template.
- Final Fire Reporting requirements and processes were amended in the Fire Notifications section to align with the new InFORM fire reporting module.
- The Post-fire response section was updated to align with current policy.
- Table 5: WFDSS Approval Authorities was reformatted to be 508 compliant.
- The Cost Share Agreement and Billing Procedures sections were revised to more clearly describe Alaska processes.
- Annual Fixed Costs were reviewed and updated for 2020.
- Haines Area Fire Management Roles and responsibilities were updated.