

## **Appendix G. HISTORY OF FIRE MANAGEMENT PLANNING IN ALASKA**

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### **Fire Management Roles and Responsibilities**

The history of fire management within Alaska dates back to 1939 when the Alaskan Fire Control Service was established under the General Land Office. Headquartered in Anchorage, it was given responsibility for fire suppression on an estimated 225 million fire-prone acres of public domain lands in Alaska. When the Bureau of Land Management (BLM) was formed in 1946, it received the management authority for most of Alaska's federal lands and absorbed the Alaska Fire Control Service. The BLM fire organization was based in Fairbanks and Anchorage and the two offices worked cooperatively but separately. The BLM also kept a Division of Fire Management at the State Office.

In 1959, the first of three big divestitures of land managed by BLM-Alaska began and, with the changes in land management authority, issues regarding wildland fire suppression responsibilities arose.

- Under the Alaska Statehood Act of 1959, the State was granted 104 million acres of land.
- Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of 1971 (ANCSA) established Native corporations and an entitlement of 44 million acres for those corporations.
- The Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA) transferred approximately 100 million acres from BLM administration to the National Park Service and Fish and Wildlife Service.

Under ANCSA, the federal government was directed to continue to provide wildland fire suppression on lands conveyed to Native regional and village corporations. In response to ANILCA, Secretarial Order #3077, dated March 17, 1982, creating "a fire line organization with headquarters in Fairbanks" was issued. BLM Alaska Fire Service (AFS) was formed and, in Department of the Interior Manual 620, AFS was assigned the fire suppression responsibility for all Department of Interior administered lands in Alaska and Native Corporation land conveyed under ANCSA. Department of Interior administered lands include land managed by the BLM, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Although AFS implements fire suppression for DOI agencies, individual agencies remain accountable for following agency-specific mandates and policies for resource and wildland fire management.

The State of Alaska established a wildland fire suppression organization in the Department of Natural Resources, Division of Forestry (DOF), and, in the mid-1970s, began to gradually assume suppression responsibilities beginning in the Haines area. A reciprocal fire protection agreement was signed by the BLM-AFS, the USFS, and DOF to cooperatively provide fire suppression operations in fire-prone areas. Under the agreement, AFS assumed suppression responsibility for wildland fires in the northern half of Alaska, regardless of ownership. By 1985, DOF had assumed suppression responsibility for wildland fires in Southcentral and most of Southwestern Alaska, as well as in portions of the Central Interior adjacent to the road-system. The U.S. Forest Service assumed suppression responsibility for state, federal, and Native lands within the boundaries of the Chugach and Tongass National Forests.

In 2010, the reciprocal fire protection agreements between the Protecting Agencies (DOF, BLM-AFS, and USFS) and the individual memorandum of agreement between land management agencies (FWS, NPS, BIA) were consolidated into the *2015 Alaska Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Agreement (Alaska Master Agreement)*. The *Alaska Master Agreement* and its exhibits (including the *Alaska Statewide Operating Plan* and this *AIWFMP*) currently define the roles and responsibilities of the Jurisdictional and Protecting Agencies as well as operating procedures for fire management in Alaska.

## **Fire Management Planning**

The Alaska Land Use Council was created under the Alaska National Interest Lands Conservation Act of 1980 (ANILCA). This Council was directed “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). The Council advocated multi-jurisdictional planning efforts and created the Fire Control Project Group to establish definitions and criteria for categories of fire protection and response as well as a schedule, organization, and process for completing interagency fire plans (Alaska Interagency Fire Planning Guidelines, revised 1984). The Fire Control Project Group later became the Alaska Interagency Fire Management Council, which evolved into the current Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG).

The basis for interagency wildland fire management in Alaska is found in the 13 Interagency Fire Management Plans (IFMPs) completed between 1982 and 1988 at the direction of the Alaska Land Use Council. Four fire management options (Critical, Full, Modified and Limited) that set the resource assignment priorities and describe the standard response to a wildfire within the option boundaries were defined. Values-at-risk, ecological considerations and suppression costs were factors used to develop the management option criteria. The first Alaska IFMP for the Tanana-Minchumina Planning Area was completed and approved in 1982. Using that plan as a model and reference, 12 more plans were completed through the collaborative efforts of interagency, interdisciplinary teams. Public input was solicited throughout the planning process.

### **1980s Interagency Fire Management Plans**

These plans were developed through the collaborative efforts of interagency, interdisciplinary teams and applied on a statewide, interagency, multi-jurisdictional, landscape scale. They provided land managers with wildland fire strategy choices and provided operational direction to the suppression agencies. *Alaska Interagency Fire Planning Guidelines* were published in 1984 to assist the planning group in expediting the completion of the plans. The following 13 plans provided “an opportunity for land managers within the planning area to accomplish their land use objectives through cooperative fire management” (*Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plan, Tanana/Minchumina Planning Area*) and standardized management options statewide.

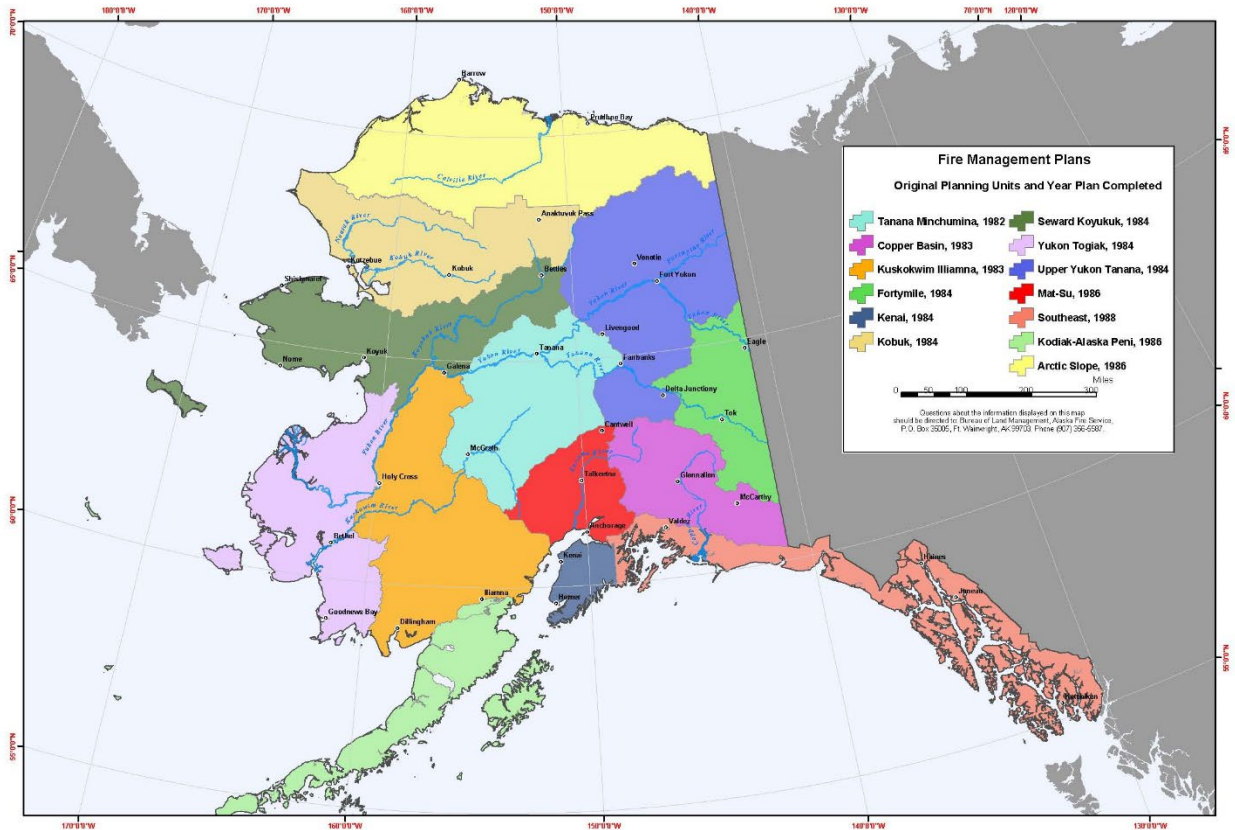


Figure 3: Alaska Interagency Fire Management Plans, Original Planning Units and Year Plan Completed

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

By 1988, the interagency fire management plans had been implemented across the state. Each plan contained a description of the local environmental and socioeconomic conditions, natural and cultural resources, fire history and behavior, and local subsistence activities. The plans provided a coordinated, cost effective, landscape scale approach to fire management, a consistent interagency approach to operational procedures and a systematic method for the identification and prioritization of values-to-be-protected. The initial response to a wildfire was determined by the management option designation and the likely consequences of the fire on firefighter and public safety.

### 1998 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan, as amended 1998

At the direction of the AWFCG, the common elements in the 13 original IFMPs were consolidated during the 1990s and by 1998, *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan* was completed. It provided the land managers and fire suppression organizations a single reference for interagency fire management operational information. The Plan clarified and streamlined existing fire management planning documents and also incorporated operational changes that had occurred since the 1980s statewide fire management planning effort.

### **2010 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan**

This Plan updated and superseded the *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan, as amended 1998*. The update was completed in response to public requests for more information regarding Alaskan fire management practices, to clarify interagency guidelines, policies and operational direction for responses to wildland fires, and to bring terminology up to date. This Plan affirms that firefighter and public safety is the first priority in all fire management activities for all agencies. It also reaffirms the concepts presented in the 1998 Plan and previous Alaskan interagency fire planning efforts. The stated purpose of the 2010 Plan was to promote a cooperative, consistent, cost-effective, interagency approach to wildland fire management and to be the interagency reference for wildland fire operational direction in Alaska.

### **2016 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan**

This Plan updates and supersedes the *2010 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan*. It updates terminology and management criteria to reflect changes in policy and interagency agreements. It continues to provide a framework of common standards, terminology, and expectations in order to facilitate effective cooperation and collaboration between the federal, state and Alaska Natives entities to achieve both wildland fire protection and ecological goals in a safe, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

Significant changes between the 2010 and 2016 plans include:

- Reorganization of chapters within the Plan to better align with DOI FMP guidance.
- Reduced duplication by referencing the *Alaska Master Agreement* and *Alaska Annual Operating Plan (AOP)* direction where possible.
- Additional emphasis on the role of Jurisdictional Unit FMPs/RMPs where they exist.
- Clarified definition of Non-standard Response.
- Revised fire notification requirements:
  - Jurisdictions should be notified immediately for fires occurring in all Management Options.
  - Jurisdictions whose lands may be threatened within two burning periods should be notified.
- Clarified the fire management roles and responsibilities related to different types of Native organizations and referenced more detailed information in the *AOP*.
- Consolidated Alaska Fire Management and Planning History into Appendix G.
- Clarified distinction between Statewide Goals and Planning Objectives and Default Initial Response Actions and Priorities.

- Revised Operational Decision Chart to reflect updated WFDSS decision support direction.
- Recognizes that Fire Management Option selection should consider population density as opposed to the presence or absence of human life and inhabited property.
- Corrected conflicting direction regarding Plan review requirements.
- Fire occurrence statistics have been removed from the Plan. Statistics are not integral to the document and are available elsewhere.

### **March 2017 Review of the 2016 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan**

An interagency group with representation from each of the active members of AWFCG completed an annual review of the *2016 AIWFMP* prior to the 2017 fire season. The review and associated updates were certified by the AWFCG Chair, and the updated document was republished as *the Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan 2016 (March 2017 Review)*. Updates include:

- Minor grammatical, punctuation, spelling, and format changes.
- Hyperlinks updated.
- Department of the Interior Manual 620 Chapter 2 references updated to Chapter 5.
- Updated discussion of policy affecting fire management on Alaska Native lands to reflect the 2013 changes to the fee-into-trust regulation.
- Updated jurisdictional authorities in Table 1.
- Updated Figure 1: Alaska Protection Areas of Responsibility to reflect 2017 Protection Area boundary changes in the Haines Area.
- Corrected the AWFCG membership status of Anchorage Fire Department and the Association of Village Council Presidents (both were inactive).
- Added a Statewide Management Requirement so that ADF&G stream crossing requirements for anadromous streams are distinguished from requirements for crossing non-anadromous fish-bearing streams.
- Clarified notification requirements for all management options.
- Included the August 20 “Special” Modified Conversion date that was inadvertently omitted in 2016.
- Clarified that the default initial action for Limited fires should include assessment of the fire’s potential to affect neighboring values.
- Updated Post-fire Response language to reflect current national policy and include options for post-fire response on non-federal lands.
- Updated fire investigation language for consistency with policy.
- Updated data sources language to reflect current products and processes regarding Management Option and Protection Area boundary changes, as well as fire perimeters, Known Sites, and ownership data.
- Included a citation in the Science and Climate Change chapter that was inadvertently omitted in 2016.
- Updated Appendix A: Fire Management Operational Direction to reflect changes elsewhere in the document.

- Updated Appendix B: Fire Notification Jurisdictional Contacts based on changes in the 2017 AOP.
- Updated Appendix C: Fire Notification Log to include management option and initial response information.
- Updated Appendix D: Fire Management Option Change Procedures and Appendix E: Fire Management Option Change Approval Form to ensure proper documentation and updating of associated data.
- Updated Appendix F: Known Sites Update Procedures to reflect current processes and acknowledge potential changes to the data product.
- Added link to Statewide Fire Management Option Reference Map.
- Updated this Appendix G: History of Fire Management in Alaska to reflect 2017 updates to the AIWFMP.
- Appendix H: Annual Review Certification completed and signed by the AWFCG Chair.

### **March 2018 Review of the 2016 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan**

An interagency group with representation from each of the active members of AWFCG completed an annual review of the 2016 AIWFMP prior to the 2018 fire season. The review and associated updates were certified by the AWFCG Chair and the updated document was republished as the *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan 2016 (March 2018 Review)*. Updates include:

- Minor grammatical, punctuation, spelling, and format changes.
- Document edited for compliance with Section 508 of the Workforce Rehabilitation Act.
- Signatories on Signature page remain as they were in 2016 when the document was originally signed. The 2017 and 2018 reviews only require a signature from the AWFCG Chair. The Association of Village Council Presidents (AVCP) was inactive in AWFCG in 2016 and did not sign. AVCP is once again active in AWFCG and has reviewed and signed the document on an additional signature page. The Anchorage Fire Department is no longer a voting member and did not sign.
- Section 1.2.1.3: Corrected AVCP's AWFCG status to active and clarified that they are an additional point of contact for some allotment owners within their BIA compact service area.
- Table 1 was corrected to reflect current jurisdictional authorities.
- Section 3.9 Fire Investigation was updated to align with changes in the 2018 AOP related to notifications.
- Section 3.11 and sub-sections were updated to better describe Alaska Wildland Fire Digital Atlas products and capture changes to the Alaska Known Sites Database.
- Section 4.4 Known Sites Updates and Appendix F: Known Sites Update Procedures were updated to reflect changes to the Alaska Known Sites Database.
- Appendix B: The Fire Notification Jurisdictional Contacts Table was corrected to include the BLM Arctic District Office.
- The requirement to include the Fire Notification Log with the final fire report package was removed in order to align with changes in the 2018 AOP.

- Appendix D: Fire Management Option Change Procedures was modified to clarify that affected and adjacent agencies should be involved in the change process. The role in the change process formerly held by the AFS Business and Technology Branch Manager was given to the AFS Fire Planning Specialists.
- Updated Appendix G: History of Fire Management in Alaska to reflect 2018 updates to the *AIWFMP*.
- Appendix H: Annual Review Certification completed and signed by the AWFCG Chair.

### **March 2019 Review of the 2016 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan**

An interagency group with representation from each of the active members of AWFCG completed an annual review of the *2016 AIWFMP* prior to the 2019 fire season. The review and associated updates were certified by the AWFCG Chair and the updated document was republished as the *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan 2016 (March 2019 Review)*. Updates include:

- Minor grammatical, punctuation, spelling, and format changes.
- Document edited for compliance with Section 508 of the Workforce Rehabilitation Act.
- Signatories on Signature page remain as they were in 2016 when the document was originally signed. The 2017 through 2019 reviews only require a signature from the AWFCG Chair.
- Includes additional detail describing ADEC and the ESMP
- Edits to fee-to-trust language stating that regulation is currently under review.
- Missile Defense Agency removed from Table 1: Jurisdictional Authorities. Lands used by the agency are managed by USAG Alaska.
- Referenced the DOF-JBER agreement, new in 2019.
- Added a statewide management requirement at the request of DOF: “Coordinate with state land managers whenever fire response activities may restrict use of public waters or impact state resources below the ordinary high water mark or on emergent islands.”
- Provided additional detail regarding notifications beyond initial response.
- Added notification requirements regarding impacts to state resources below the ordinary high water mark and restricted use of public waters.
- Updated ES & BAR language to align with current national direction.
- Updated Prevention, Origin & Cause Determination, and Fire Investigation sections to align with AOP and current policies. Updated notification requirements for uncertified Native Allotments to include both BLM and BIA.

## **March 2020 Review of the 2016 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan**

An interagency group with representation from each of the active members of AWFCG completed an annual review of the *2016 AIWFMP* prior to the 2020 fire season. The review and associated updates were certified by the AWFCG Chair and the updated document was republished as the *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan 2016 (March 2020 Review)*. Updates include:

- Minor grammatical, punctuation, spelling, and format changes.
- Two items regarding public waters were reviewed:
  - The Statewide Management Requirement in Section 3.2.1 regarding coordination with the State when activities on public waterways might be affected.
  - The paragraph in Section 3.4 regarding notifications to the State when response activities may affect public waterways. It was agreed that the language would not be changed for the 2020 Review but that it would be reviewed again in 2021. It was also agreed that an associated WFDSS Statewide Management requirement would not be included in the system until after the 2021 review.

## **2021 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan**

This Plan updates and supersedes the *2016 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan*. It updates terminology and management criteria to reflect changes in policy and interagency agreements. It continues to provide a framework of common standards, terminology, and expectations in order to facilitate effective cooperation and collaboration between the federal, state and Alaska Natives entities to achieve both wildland fire protection and ecological goals in a safe, efficient, and cost-effective manner.

Significant changes between the *2020 review of the 2016 AIWFMP* and the *2021 AIWFMP* include:

- Minor grammatical, punctuation, spelling, and format changes.
- Hyperlinks validated and updated as needed.
- Updated signature authorities to reflect personnel changes since 2016.
- Section 1.1 amended to recognize the authority of individual agency land/resource management plans.
- Section 1.2.1.1 amended to describe additional policy and authorities:
  - Good Neighbor Authority
  - Pittman-Robertson Act
  - Reserve Treaty Rights Lands
  - Dingell Act
  - Executive Order 13855
- Section 1.2.1.2 amended to reflect changes to State wildland fire protection laws implemented through House Bill 355.
- Section 1.2.1.2 amended to address Alaska Department of Fish and Game land management authority and the protection of anadromous fish habitat.
- Section 1.2.1.3 amended to clarify policy affecting fire management on Alaska Native lands.
- Section 1.2.2.1 amended to provide background on jurisdictional authorities in Alaska.



- Section 1.3 amended to describe U.S. Forest Service Fire Management Reference Systems.
- Section 2.1 amended to include two additional goals:
  - Prevent human starts to the extent possible.
  - Investigate wildfires to understand cause and recover cost when possible.
- Section 2.1 amended to remove a goal regarding adherence to laws and regulations. It was agreed that this is self-evident.
- Section 2.3 Statewide Management Considerations reorganized and amended.
- Section 3.2.1 Statewide Management Requirements reorganized and amended.
- Section 3.2.1 public waters Statewide Management Requirement updated. Change made at the request of DOI agencies was reviewed and approved by a DOI Solicitor as well as by participating agencies. Updated Statewide Management Requirement will be carried over to WFDSS Requirements.
- Section 3.2.3 amended to clarify the purpose of designated Fire Management Options.
- Sections 3.2.3.1 - 3.2.3.4 amended to clarify that notifications to jurisdictions are required when their lands are threatened by wildfires (replaced “should be notified” with “will be notified”).
- Section 3.2.3.2 amended to recognize Full protection sites as well as Full protection areas similarly to the Critical Option.
- Section 3.2.3.3 amended to include an exception for initial resource allocation priority that was unintentionally omitted from the pre-conversion Modified Option.
- Section 3.2.3.3 amended to recognize that Modified conversion dates may be selected based on local considerations informed by the Alaska FDOP and are not limited to a specific set of dates.
- Section 3.2.4 amended to clarify rationale behind non-standard responses.
- Section 3.4 public waters notification requirement updated. Change made at the request of DOI agencies was reviewed and approved by a DOI Solicitor as well as by participating agencies.
- Section 3.5.1.1 amended to clarify Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation’s smoke management role in prescribed fire.
- Section 3.5.2.2 amended to better describe FireWise programs.
- Section 3.6 and sub-sections amended to align with policy changes in Emergency Stabilization and Burned Area Rehabilitation programs.
- Section 4.6 amended and additional references cited to reflect recent advances in climate change science.
- Appendix B updated to reflect recent organizational changes.
- Appendices D & E updated to streamline Fire Management Option change procedures.
- Appendix F updated with changes to Alaska Known Sites Database contacts.
- Appendix G updated with 2021 Plan amendments.
- Document checked for compliance with Section 508 of the Workforce Rehabilitation Act.

## **March 2022 Review of the 2021 Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan**

The *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan* is reviewed annually by AWFCG. Every five years, or as deemed necessary by a majority of AWFCG voting members, a comprehensive review will be completed and approved by all AWFCG organizations. The latest comprehensive review was completed in 2021 and amendments were approved by line officers from all participating organizations.

The *Alaska Interagency Wildland Fire Management Plan, 2021* was reviewed by the Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group as of **March 2, 2022**.

The following edits were completed:

- Minor grammatical, punctuation, spelling, and format changes. Blank pages were removed from the document.
- Document edited for compliance with Section 508 of the Workforce Rehabilitation Act.
- Hyperlinks were updated where needed and URL text was removed for 508 compliance.
- Signatories on Signature page remain as they were in 2021 when the document was originally signed. The 2022 through 2025 reviews only require a signature from the AWFCG Chair.
- The Alaska DNR section under 1.2.1.2 State Fire Management Policy was reorganized for clarity with no significant content change.
- The Tribal Governments section under 1.2.1.3 Policy Affecting Fire Management on Alaska Native Lands was updated to briefly describe recent changes to the fee-to-trust process.
- Table 1 was corrected to indicate that for fire management purposes, tentatively approved lands fall under the jurisdiction of ANCSA corporations not the Federal Government.
- The third bullet in Section 2.3 Statewide Management Considerations was modified from “The population of Alaska is increasing; subdivisions and residential areas are expanding into previously undeveloped areas” to “In many areas of Alaska subdivisions and residential areas are expanding into previously undeveloped areas.” Per the 2020 census, Alaska population is not increasing; however, expansion into undeveloped areas continues.
- The 10<sup>th</sup> bullet under Section 3.2.1 Statewide Management Requirements was amended to clarify that waterbodies known to harbor invasive species will not be used as water sources for air or ground-based water delivery equipment unless needed to protect life or property. Previously only dip sites were explicitly mentioned.
- Section 3.2.4 Non-standard Responses was amended from, “The operational guidelines pre-determined by the point of origin management option may not be appropriate for every fire” to, “The operational guidelines pre-determined by the point of origin management option are not appropriate for every fire” in order to emphasize the need to assess the standard response to every fire and ensure it is appropriate under existing conditions.

- Site protection designation labels were changed in Section 3.3 Site Protection Designations as follows:
  - **Non-Protected** was changed to **No Protection** for clarity and in order to align with the AK Known Sites Database data standard.
  - **Unknown** was changed to **Undesignated** to help clarify that protection levels are intentionally not assigned to some sites.
- Section 3.4 Fire Notifications was amended to clarify the following:
  - That Protecting Agencies must notify Jurisdictions of non-statistical fires and prevention actions that are on or threaten their lands even if no fire number was generated and/or no suppression action was taken.
  - That BIA is also required to be notified for fires affecting uncertificated (or not yet patented) Native Allotment applications even though the jurisdictional responsibility resides with BLM. (Also amended in Appendix B.)
  - Initial and extended fire notification requirements. (Also amended Tables 2-6 and Appendix A.)
- Section 3.4 Fire Notifications was amended to show a name change from Appendix C: Fire Notification Log to Appendix C: Fire Notification Checklist and to require notification for significant property damage.
- A short Invasive Species Control section was added (3.6) that references more detailed information in the Alaska Statewide Operating Plan.
- Sections 3.7 Post Fire Response, 3.8 Prevention, 3.9 Origin and Cause Determination and 3.10 Fire Investigations were shortened to a brief statement referencing the Alaska Statewide Operating Plan instead of duplicating that information.
- Section 3.12.4 Fire Locations and Perimeters was amended to remove the statement that AICC is considered to be the definitive perimeter source. The National Incident Feature Server is now considered the authoritative source.
- Section 4.1 AWFCG Fire Management Plan Review/Revision was amended to align the plan approval date from April 1 to March 15 as indicated in the Alaska Statewide Operating Plan.
- Appendix B Required Jurisdictional Fire Notifications was amended to reflect the new USFWS and NPS Alaska organizational structures and add the DOF Area Forester as the contact for lands under state jurisdiction and state protection.
- The USFS Known Sites Database contact was updated in Appendix F, Table F-1.
- Sections 1.2.1.2, 3.4, and 3.12 were modified to describe the ADEC Solid Waste Program's responsibilities regarding landfill fires and a notification requirement for escaped landfill fires was added.