

## **Appendix D. FIRE MANAGEMENT OPTION CHANGE PROCEDURES**

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Each of the land managing Federal and State agencies and ANCSA Corporations in Alaska have their own missions, goals, and objectives related to their lands. To effectively prioritize and manage Alaska wildfires there is a need to consider the full spectrum of initial responses to wildfire; from suppression actions designed to contain and control fire growth, to periodic surveillance of fires that are allowed to spread naturally across the landscape. To accomplish this, jurisdictional organizations and Protecting Agencies have collaboratively assigned one of four Fire Management Options (**Critical, Full, Modified, and Limited**) to nearly all lands in Alaska. Pre-identified Fire Management Options allow fire managers to:

- Quickly prioritize areas for protection actions and the allocation of available initial attack firefighting resources to achieve protection objectives.
- Optimize the ability to achieve land use and resource management objectives and integrate fire management, mission objectives, land use, and natural resource goals.
- Reinforce the premise that the cost of suppression efforts should be commensurate with the economic, social, and resource values identified for protection.

Management options are assigned at a landscape scale and apply across jurisdictional boundaries. Considerations in their selection may include public and private values to be protected operationally. The management option at a wildfire's point of origin prescribes the default initial response to the incident and allows Protecting Agencies to rapidly prioritize initial attack resources and respond when Jurisdictional Agencies are unavailable for consultation.

**There is no guarantee of protection from wildfire in any management option or on any site.**

Management option designations are intended to be flexible. The default initial response will not be appropriate for every fire and may be overridden based on incident-specific considerations. See **3.2.3 Non-standard Responses**.

Jurisdictional Agencies and ANCSA Corporations have an annual opportunity to review wildfire management options and site designations on their lands and update them if warranted by changes in objectives, fire conditions, land use patterns, resource information, and/or technologies. Management option changes should be a collaborative effort between all affected jurisdictional and protecting units. Changes will not be made without the approval of all Jurisdictional Agency Administrators whose lands are affected or without concurrence by the Protecting Agency.

The following procedures are designed to ensure adequate and consistent documentation of management option changes. Collaboration between all affected Protecting and Jurisdictional Agencies (including ANCSA Corporations) is essential in the management option review and change processes. Statewide Fire Planners and AFS GIS Staff are available to assist. **Completed change packages are due to Alaska Fire Service by March 1.**

## **Annual Management Option Review Process & Responsibilities**

1. Protecting FMOs will annually provide reminders of fire management option review/change responsibilities to Jurisdictional Agencies within their Protecting Units. Reminders may be written, emailed, or transmitted verbally.
2. Protecting and Jurisdictional Agencies will conduct internal and interagency reviews of fire management option boundaries and/or protection levels.
3. Non-standard responses will be reviewed annually by Protecting and Jurisdictional Agencies to validate fire management option boundaries and protection levels.

## **Option Change Process Overview**

1. Management Option boundary and/or protection level changes are typically initiated by Jurisdictional Agencies but may be initiated by Protecting Agencies or other cooperators.
2. All affected and adjacent Jurisdictional Agencies and Protecting FMOs will be made aware of and given the opportunity to participate in the change process.
3. Approved and verified Management Option change packages will be submitted by Protecting FMOs to the AFS Fire Planning Specialists, AICC Emergency Operations Coordinator, and AFS GIS Staff by March 1.
4. The Interagency Fire Management Option Boundaries layer will be updated by April 1.
5. If any participant in the review/change process believes that the change process has been circumvented, unfairly implemented, or unduly delayed they will notify their AWFCG representative. The AWFCG is the final arbitrator for resolving procedural issues associated with the fire management option review/change process.

## **Option Change Initiator Responsibilities**

1. Ensure all affected and adjacent Jurisdictional Agencies and Protecting FMOs are aware of and are given the opportunity to participate in the option change process.
2. Prepare the option change package. This includes the following required documentation:
  - a. Written description of the proposed change(s) and the rationale behind them. Use the Change Description and Rationale section of Fire Management Option Change Approval Form (Appendix E).
  - b. Pdf display map(s) that represent the change(s).
  - c. GIS data files (e.g., zipped shapefiles or a zipped geodatabase) with enough basic metadata to clearly define the change(s).
3. Ensure the Representative(s) from the affected Jurisdictional Unit(s) have reviewed and verified that the proposed option change(s) meet the intent and requirements of their agency.
4. Ensure the FMO(s) from the affected Protecting Unit(s) have reviewed and verified that the proposed option change(s) are operationally feasible.

5. Incorporate all mutually agreed upon modifications to the change package before obtaining signatures. If any affected Jurisdictional or Protecting Units do not concur with the change request, notify the primary Protecting FMO who will elevate the request to AWFCG for adjudication.
6. Circulate the verified change package among all affected Jurisdictional Agencies and obtain signatures for certification.
7. Verify that all steps in the Management Option Change Checklist have been completed and submit the complete change package to the primary Protecting FMO for final review and certification(s) **before March 1**.
8. Be prepared to answer questions and provide additional data upon request.

### **Jurisdictional Agency Responsibilities**

1. Provide values data as needed to support the proposed change and communicate jurisdictional concerns regarding proposed changes.
2. Assist with change package preparation.
3. Jurisdictional Agencies must approve all management option boundary and/or protection level changes within their jurisdiction by signing and dating within the *Jurisdictional Agency Certification(s)* portion of the Fire Management Option Change Approval Form (**Appendix E**).

### **Protecting FMO Responsibilities**

1. All option changes will be reviewed by the affected Protecting FMO(s) to determine whether they are operationally feasible. Protecting FMOs may propose modifications to the change proposal if feasibility concerns are identified. It is important that Protecting FMOs are involved early in the change process to avoid last-minute changes and delays.
2. If the proposed change(s) involves more than one Protection Area, one Protecting FMO will be identified to as the primary point-of-contact for obtaining Protecting FMO signatures, submitting the final change packet to BLM AFS and AICC staff and communicating with AWFCG (as necessary).
3. If any affected units do not concur with the change request, the primary Protecting FMO will bring the concerns before the AWFCG for adjudication, ensure that the change package is amended to conform with AWFCG's decision and re-circulated by the Change Initiator for signatures.
4. Upon receiving the final change package with Jurisdictional signatures, the primary Protecting FMO will:
  - a. Verify the final change package is accurate and complete.
  - b. Verify that all affected Jurisdictional and Protecting Units have had opportunity to participate in the change process and have agreed on the change(s).

- c. Verify that all affected Jurisdictional Units have signed the Fire Management Option Change Approval Form (**Appendix E**).
  - d. Circulate the final change package Fire Management Option Change Approval Form for signature by all affected Protecting FMOs (and the AWFCG Chair if necessary).
5. The primary Protecting FMO will submit the final change package (see **Appendix E** for details). **The deadline for submitting the final change package to the BLM AFS Fire Planning Specialists, BLM AFS GIS staff and AICC Emergency Operations Coordinator is March 1.**
  6. The Protecting FMO(s) will be responsible for notifying all affected Jurisdictional Agencies that the changes have taken effect and for ensuring that any local Protecting Unit map products are updated with the approved changes.

### **BLM Alaska Fire Service and AICC Responsibilities**

1. Changes to the Interagency Fire Management Option Boundaries layer will be processed by the Alaska Fire Service GIS staff. Electronic archives of historical fire management option data will be maintained. Questions about spatial data will be referred to the Change Initiator identified on the Fire Management Option Change Approval Form (**Appendix E**).
2. The AICC Emergency Operations Coordinator will archive the Fire Management Option change package.
3. AFS GIS staff will ensure that the appropriate Protecting FMOs, AICC Emergency Operations Coordinator and the AFS Fire Planning Specialists are notified when approved changes have been incorporated into the Interagency Fire Management Option Boundaries layer.
4. AFS Fire Planning Specialists will ensure that management option changes are made available to WFDSS and other systems (e.g., [AICC– Alaska Statewide Master Agreement webpage](#), Fire Management Option Change History, etc.).