

I. Introduction

National Fire Policy (NFP) calls for an interagency and multidisciplinary approach to managing wildland fires, since fires respect no jurisdictional boundaries. The ultimate goal is a fully integrated fire management program with uniform policies and practices providing for a seamless, cross-boundary approach to wildland fire management. Recognizing that fire planning procedures are different among all federal land management agencies, a common template for fire management planning was developed. This document is the integration of the existing Glenwood Springs Field Office (GSFO) FMP completed in 2002 into the interagency template.



I.A. Purpose

This Fire Management Plan (FMP) identifies resource values and conditions pertaining to fire management in the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Glenwood Springs Field Office (GSFO). The FMP recommends strategies for:

- Wildland Fire Suppression,
- Wildland Fire Use (WFU),
- Prescribed Fire,
- Non-Fire Fuels Treatment ,
- Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation (ESR), and
- Community Assistance/Protection.

These strategies, which are addressed in detail in Chapters III and IV, are in conformance with and would implement the decisions and direction within the GSFO Resource Management Plan (RMP) as amended in September 2002

The fire management strategies presented here will be considered in preparation of the Annual Work Plan and development of annual budget requests. Proposed actions, alternatives, and environmental analyses in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) will be derived from these strategies and will be used in the development of site-specific projects. The information in this plan may strengthen cumulative effects analysis when planning and analyzing site-specific projects. In addition, this FMP lays the foundation for future collaborative efforts involving interagency partners and state and local cooperators.

I.A.1 National Direction for Fire Management Planning

The FMP was completed to comply with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review-1995 and 2001; The Interagency Fire Management Plan Template; and A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan. The 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy directs BLM Field Offices to have an approved FMP for every area with burnable vegetation. FMPs define a strategy for managing and prioritizing wildland fire and prescribing vegetation treatments for fuel hazard reduction and resource benefit.

I.B. Relationship to Environmental Compliance

The FMP is tiered from the 1988 Glenwood Springs Resource Area (GSRA) Resource Management Plan (RMP) which is tiered from agency policies. The 1988 GSRA (see Map 1B) RMP did detail general fire management zones (Fire Exclusion, Fire Management, Limited Suppression). However specific zone boundaries, management prescriptions and resource goals were never established in a FMP. Without an approved FMP, the GSFO had no strategy for; managing and prioritizing wildland fire, prescribing vegetation treatments for fuel hazard reduction and resource benefit, or utilizing wildland fires to accomplish land use and resource management objectives. The lack of a detailed FMP led to aggressive suppression action on all wildland fires. Although firefighter safety and public safety and resource concerns were always considered in selecting a fire management strategy, resource benefits could not be a primary consideration.

Land uses, land issues and vegetation (fuels) have changed since the completion of the 1988 RMP, especially in the private land - public land interface. The GSFO wildland fire and vegetation management now reflects a consideration of fire history, land status, issues, concerns, and other resource objectives. Strict fire control has been replaced by more balanced fire management which emphasizes protection and lets fire function as a natural process within certain prescriptions in specific areas. Fire managers have latitude to consider;

1. Human safety,
2. Protection of improvements, property, cultural resources, threatened or endangered species, and high value resources,
3. Return fire to its natural role in the ecosystem.
4. Enhancement of natural resources that can benefit from the careful application of fire,
5. Hazardous fuel reduction, and
6. Fiscal efficiency of fire management operations.

Environmental Assessment (EA) Number: CO 140-2001-0051 amended the GSRA RMP of 1984 (Revised 1988). The FMP EA served as the analysis for implementing wildland fire management. The FMP is categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis, because it does not make decisions outside the scope of the RMP. The EA also served as a programmatic analysis (general guidance) for "fuel hazard reduction" treatments and vegetation treatments that would benefit resources. A future site-specific document that complies with the National Environmental Policy Act and other applicable laws and regulations will be written for each prescribed vegetation treatment, incorporating this document by reference. An EA will be prepared to analyze changes or updates to the FMP that are not adequately addressed by other NEPA documents. Prescribed vegetation treatments may also be derived from research, assessments and other plans.

The FMP is also consistent with conservation measures outlined in pertinent programmatic BOs, as well as conservation measures and agreements resulting from formal consultation pursuant to the Endangered Species Act (ESA). Future actions potentially affecting ESA listed species will be subject to consultation as needed.

I.B.1 Adaptability and Plan Monitoring

Adaptability is of utmost importance to this FMP. As provided in H-1601-1 - Land Use Planning Handbook, the FMP allows managers seasonal and annual application flexibility, based on factors such as resources, weather and operational capability. For effective "adaptive management" (a feedback approach to management that uses monitoring results to plan future actions) land management agencies must rely upon a continuous process of interagency and public feedback to monitor the outcomes and consequences of the selected management strategies.

The fire suppression information presented in this FMP will be updated regularly to ensure that the most current information is available for use in the resource and budget allocation process.

The fire management strategies and priorities recommended in this FMP will be updated as appropriate to reflect current issues and conditions. Adjustments (refining zone boundaries, authorizing a more conservative management approach based on the previous years' fire activity, changing the allowable burned acreage, border adjustments as counties and other agencies complete their FMPs, etc.) will not require amending the RMP but would be done through plan maintenance. Major changes, like revising FMUs, would require amending the RMP.

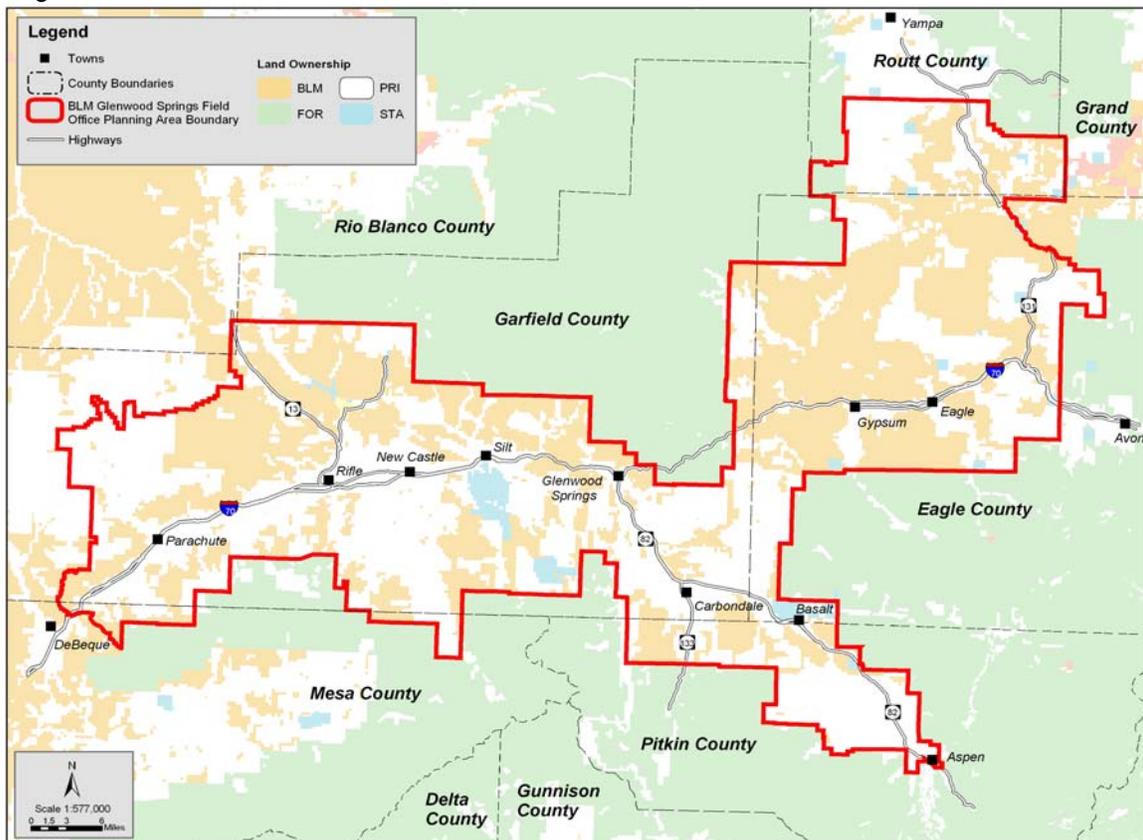
I.C. Collaboration

The GSFO FMP was coordinated across ownership and jurisdictional boundaries. The neighboring BLM Field Offices have corresponding FMPs for the respective Resource Areas. In 2003 the White River National Forest completed a corresponding FMP for adjacent forest lands. The 2000 Colorado Legislature passed House Bill 1283 which clarified responsibilities for wildfire management. The bill redefines the responsibilities of Sheriff's, State Board of Agriculture, and the State Forester from preventing and controlling wildland fires to managing wildland fires. House Bill 1283 authorizes counties to prepare and implement FMPs that detail individual County polices on fire management for prescribed burns or natural ignition burns on lands owned by the State or county.

I.C.1 Agencies Covered by this FMP

The FMP covers fire management and vegetation treatment responsibilities on 567,000 acres of public land administered by the BLM's GSFO in: Eagle, Garfield, Pitkin, Routt, Mesa and Rio Blanco Counties in Colorado (Figure I.C.1).

Figure I.C.1



I.C.2 Collaboration during Development of the Plan

A Notice of Intent to amend the RMP for the management of wildland fire and prescriptive vegetation treatments was published in the Federal Register on May 24, 2001 (Volume 66, Number 101, Page 28759-28760).

In addition to agency coordination, public open houses were held in Glenwood Springs, Colorado on June 26, 2001 and Eagle, Colorado on June 28, 2001. The open houses provided ideas and suggestions that helped create a draft FMP. The GSFO asked for comments on the draft FMP via a formal comment period which ran from July 30, 2001 through August 31, 2001. Comments were accepted and coordination with local, State and Federal agencies continued through April 2002. The 60-day Governor's consistency review and the 30-day protest period occurred in June and July of 2002 and both ended on August 2, 2002. Throughout the planning process interested persons could visit the GSFO website at <http://www.co.blm.gov/gsra/gshome.htm> or contact the project planner for current information or to see maps of the proposed fire management zones.

Consultation occurred with: the Colorado State Forest Service, Rio Blanco County, Routt County, Mesa County, Town of Eagle, Town of Glenwood Springs, Town of Aspen, Town of Rifle, Town of Gypsum, Town of Parachute, Town of New Castle, Town of Silt, local volunteer fire departments, Colorado Division of Wildlife, US Forest Service, US Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Colorado Air Pollution Control Division.

I.C.3 Collaboration during Implementation

Federal, State, and interagency coordination were essential in the development of the FMP and will be fundamental in the application of the FMP. The BLM participates in a fully integrated fire management program with the White River National Forest (WRNF), the Grand Mesa National Forest and the Colorado National Monument (COLM). The Upper Colorado River (UCR) Interagency Fire Planning Unit (FPU) (Figure I.C.3) provides preparedness, suppression, prevention and fuels management services to the above agencies and the Grand Valley Ranger District of the Grand Mesa - Uncompahgre - Gunnison National Forests.

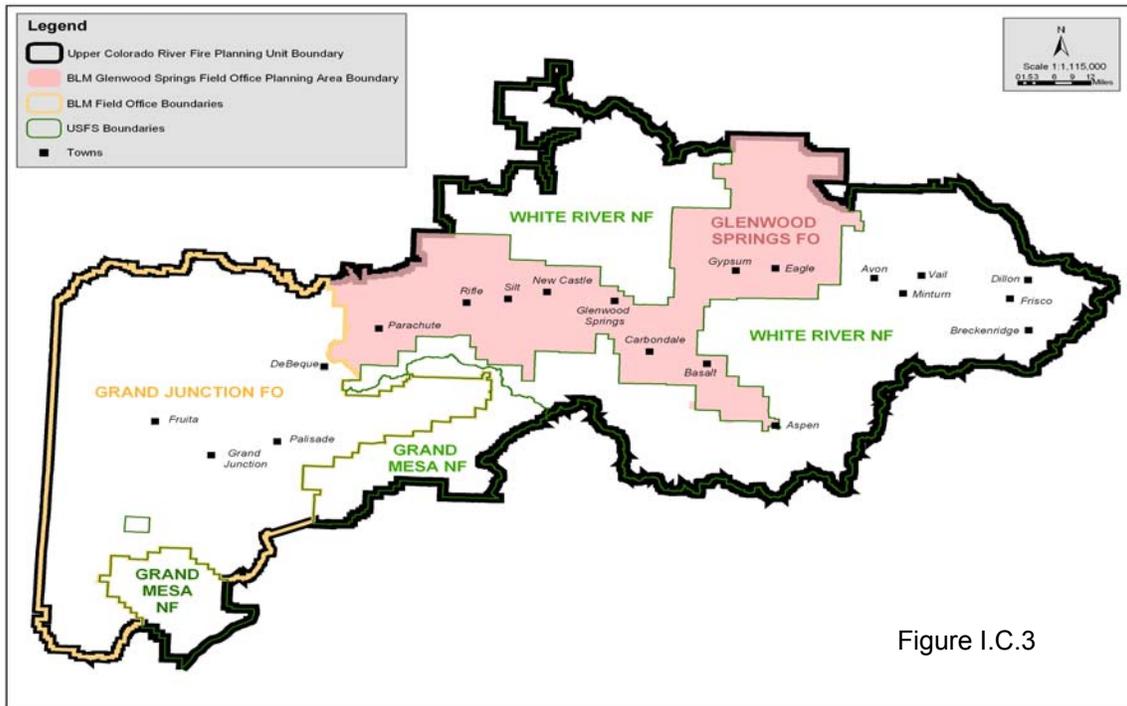


Figure I.C.3

Planning Coordination - The 2000 Colorado Legislature passed House Bill 1283 which clarified responsibilities for wildfire management. The bill redefines the responsibilities of Sheriff's, State Board of Agriculture, and the State Forester from preventing and controlling wildland fires to managing wildland fires. House Bill 1283 authorizes counties to prepare and implement FMPs that detail individual county policies on fire management for prescribed burns or natural ignition burns on lands owned by the State or county.

To be the most effective, this plan will be coordinated across ownership and jurisdictional boundaries as adjoining counties and the U.S. Forest Service complete fire planning. The intention is the creation of a seamless, coordinated, interagency effort that specifies appropriate management actions for wildland fires and prescriptive vegetation treatments. In 2000, the Colorado Legislature authorized counties to create countywide wildland FMPs. Such plans may include not only county and State lands but also private and Federal lands where landowners and managers are willing to cooperate. The BLM immediately supported the effort by providing maps, information, technical assistance, and financial support to counties in which the agency managed lands.

Cooperative Arrangements - The UCR FPU has developed cooperative arrangements to cover administrative and jurisdictional responsibilities that provide for:

- The use of closest-forces and total mobility concepts for wildland fire suppression, including personnel, equipment, and supplies;
- Development and use of fire equipment and supply caches compatible with total interagency requirements by local, geographical, and national needs;
- Training to mutually agreeable common standards and curricula;
- Mutually acceptable performance qualifications and standards for all fire management positions;
- Mutual assistance for managing wildland fires that are managed for resource benefits; and
- Mutual assistance for conducting hazardous fuels reduction, wildland urban interface treatments, and ecosystem restoration and maintenance using prescribed fire.

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) Project Collaboration - That area where homes meet wildlands is called the wildland-urban interface. The wildland-urban interface is more than a geographic area where structures intermingle with forests. It is a set of conditions where flammable structures exist within the reach of ignition sources (fire-brands) from burning wildlands. The potential exists in wildland-urban interface areas for extremely dangerous and complex fire conditions which pose a tremendous threat to public and firefighter safety.

Effective fire prevention is critical because of the values at risk. As the region's population grows, the challenge of protecting people, their homes, businesses, and natural resources, escalates yearly. A recent Denver Post article estimated that Colorado's population in the "red zone" – where homes are sprinkled in and around 6 million acres of forest - grew by 33 percent from 1990 to 2000. The population in that red zone is now at 1 million people.

Public Lands managed by the UCR FPU are intermingled with private lands and contain a large percentage of wildland-urban interface. For example, approximately 80% of the public lands managed by the GSFO are within one mile of private land. This intermixed landscape means wildland fires have a heightened potential to spread onto private property, destroying homes and valued landscapes.

In addition, many homes are being built and maintained without regard to wildland fire and, in some cases, no efforts have been made by residents to protect themselves and their property from wildland fire. Houses are built of flammable material and surrounded by wildland vegetation that is thick and choked with dead material. Such development fragments the land, making it difficult to protect homes and difficult to apply ecosystem-based land management strategies.

The answer is not one of finding new solutions but of implementing known solutions. For example, vegetation treatments can; build defensible spaces around homes, help keep wildland fires smaller, and allow fire to play a role in natural communities.

The UCR FPU coordinates local fire protection agencies and participates in, local projects to reduce wildfire risks and damages by implementing proactive community projects.

The UCR FPU works with County fire planners to identify communities and other wildland urban interface values-at-risk from wildfire and to set priorities for the mitigation of those threats. When a community or neighborhood has been identified as a priority, the BLM directs its resources to preparation of the necessary analyses and plans to reduce the fire threat on lands that the agency manages in the vicinity of the community or other values-at-risk.

Where public lands are adjacent to WUI areas, federal funding may be available for:

1. Planning and implementation of fuel treatments to mitigate risk.
2. Education and prevention efforts.
3. Completing pre-attack assessments, inventories, and plans.

Cooperative Prevention and Education - The UCR participates as a partner with other Federal, state and local fire protection agencies the creation and implementation of public and community education programs focused on mitigation and reduction of fire risk in the wildland urban interface. Projects that implement or adapt existing models such as FireFree and Firewise Communities are encouraged. Examples include education programs that lead to homeowner and community action to reduce fire risk, such as Firewise landscaping and construction, and home and property maintenance.

The USFS, Colorado State Forest Service, the Nature Conservancy, and BLM are collaborating on a series of workshops to identify a consistent message about wildland fire and forest health. The workshops bring together people in logical geographical areas who do fire education and communications.

Interagency Coordination -The UCR FPU participates in additional interagency coordination as follows:

- Colorado BLM developed a system with the Colorado State Forest Service (CSFS) to distribute Rural Fire Assistance funds to local fire departments after the department(s) had provided a detailed plan on how the funding would be utilized. The system permits close coordination of Rural Fire Assistance funding and Volunteer Fire Assistance Funding so that more efficient use could be made of the two different sources of rural fire department support.
- A catalog of Federal, state, and private foundation funding sources has been developed and placed on the website, www.rockymountainwildlandfire.info. The catalog is intended to provide a “one-stop’ location to which communities, fire departments, counties, and others can go to find financial and technical assistance to support fire and wildland health projects. Soon, the catalog will be converted to a searchable database. Development of the catalog and database is supported by the BLM, Colorado State Forest Service, and Western Forestry Leadership Coalition.
- Colorado BLM has contracted with the Natural Resource Conservation Service and Meeker Plant Center to propagate and store seed from native plants to be used in fire rehabilitation efforts.
- Worked with USFS and CSFS to organize and train fire prevention regional teams that can respond rapidly to wildland fires and prepare residents to minimize losses and distress associated with interface fires.

Cooperative Stewardship Projects - The UCR FPU may use stewardship contracting as a tool to achieve resource work identified through the normal planning processes and as described in the 10 year Implementation Plan for the NFP (www.blm.gov/nhp/efoia/wo/fy04/im2004-081attach1.pdf)

The primary objective of a stewardship contracting project is to achieve one or more of the land management goals that meet local and rural community needs. These goals as identified in the authorizing legislation may include but are not limited to:

- a. road and trail maintenance or obliteration for improved water quality;
- b. soil productivity, habitat for wildlife and fisheries, or other resource values;
- c. setting prescribed fires to improve composition, structure, condition, and health of stands or to improve wildlife habitat;
- d. removing vegetation or other activities to promote healthy forest stands, reduce fire hazards or achieve other land management objectives;
- e. watershed restoration and maintenance;
- f. restoration and maintenance of wildlife and fish habitat; and
- g. control of noxious and exotic weeds and reestablishing native plant species.

Information Sharing - Local, State and Federal land management, scientific, and regulatory agencies exchange the requisite technical information to make fully informed fire and vegetation management decisions.

I.D. Authorities

Authorities for the development of FMPs for the UCR FPU are listed below:

- Protection Act of September 20, 1922 (42 Stat. 857; U.S.C. 594).
- Taylor Grazing Act of June 28, 1934 (48 Stat. 1269; U.S.C. 315).
- O. and C. Act of August 28, 1937 (50 Stat. 874; U.S.C. 1181e).
- Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of May 27, 1955(69 Stat. 66; 42 U.S.C. 1856, 1856a).
- Economy Act of June 30, 1932 (47 Stat. 417; 31 U.S.C. 686).
- The Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (Public Law 94-579; 43 U.S.C. 1701).
- Disaster Relief Act of May 22, 1974, Section 417 (Public Law 93-288)
- Federal Fire Prevention and Control Act of October 29, 1974, 88 Stat. 1535; 15 U.S.C. 2201
- The Federal Land Management and Policy Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (Public Law 94-579; 43 U.S.C. 1701)
- Federal Grants and Cooperative Act of 1977, Pub. L. 95-244, as amended by Pub. L. 97-258, September 13, 1982. 96 Stat. 1003 31 U.S.C. 6301-6308
- Supplemental Appropriation Act of September 10, 1982, 96 Stat.837
- Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriation Act, (Public Law 103-32)
- Healthy Forests Initiative and Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 (Public Law 108-148)
- Annual Appropriations Acts for the Department of the Interior.
- United States Department of the Interior Manual (910 DM 1.3).
- 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.
- 2001 Updated Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Update).
- Departmental Manual 620 Chapter 1, Wildland Fire Management General Policy and Procedures (April 10, 1998)
- BLM Manual 9210 and BLM Manual 9200

- “A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment”, Aug. 2001.
- The National Fire Plan 10 Year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan, 2000.
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 (NEPA)
- Federal Clean Air Act (CAA) and CAA Amendments of 1990
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, Section 7
- The Wilderness Act of 1964
- The Archaeological Resources Protection Act of 1979
- The Archaeological and Historical Preservation Act of 1974, as amended
- National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, Section 106
- NPS Organic Act of 1916 (16 U.S.C. Section 1)
- NPS Director’s Order 18, Wildland Fire Management (DO-18) (November 1998)
- NPS Reference Manual 18, Wildland Fire (RM-18). (February 1999)
- NPS Director’s Order 12, Environmental Impact Analysis (DO-12)
- NPS Director’s Order 28, Cultural Resource Management (DO-28)
- NPS Management Policies (2001)