

## II. Relationship to Land Management Planning/Fire Policy

This chapter outlines the national policy, regional guidance, BLM state policy and local land use planning guidance that provide direction for this FMP.

### II.A. National Policy

#### II.A.1 The Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (FWFMP)

The FWFMP was developed by the Secretaries of the USDI and USDA in 1995 to respond to dramatic increases in the frequency, size, and catastrophic nature of wildland fires in the United States. This policy was reviewed and reaffirmed by the Secretaries in 2001. The 2001 Review and Update of the 1995 FWFMP consists of findings, guiding principles, policy statements, and implementation actions. The guiding principles, policy statements, and implementation actions are called the 2001 FWFMP. This replaces the 1995 FWFMP. The 2001 Review and Update of the 1995 FWFMP directs Federal agencies to achieve a balance between suppression to protect life, property, and resources, and fire use to regulate fuels and maintain healthy ecosystems.

The FWFMP provides nine guiding principles that are fundamental to the success of the Federal wildland fire management program and the implementation of review recommendations. These "umbrella" principles compel each agency to review its policies to ensure compatibility. The DOI BLM policies were reflected through the fire management planning process and this plan.

**Guiding Principles** - The guiding principles are:

1. Firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management activity.
2. The role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent will be incorporated into the planning process.
3. FMPs, programs, and activities support land and resource management plans and their implementation.
4. Sound risk management is a foundation for all fire management activities.
5. Fire management programs and activities are economically viable, based upon values to be protected, costs, and land and resource management objectives.
6. FMPs and activities are based upon the best available science.
7. FMPs and activities incorporate public health and environmental quality considerations.
8. Federal, State, tribal, local, interagency, and international coordination and cooperation are essential.
9. Standardization of policies and procedures among federal agencies is an ongoing objective.

**Policy Statements** - Policy statements related to fire management and fire management planning:

1. Safety - Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All FMPs and activities must reflect this commitment.
2. Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability - The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve ecosystem sustainability, including its interrelated ecological, economic, and social components.
3. Response to Wildland Fire - Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, and across agency boundaries. Response to wildland fire is based on ecological, social, and legal

consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs; the likely consequences on firefighter and public safety; the welfare of natural and cultural resources; and the values to be protected dictate the appropriate management response to the wildland fire.

4. Use of Wildland Fire - Wildland fire will be used to: protect, maintain, and enhance resources and, as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role. Use of fire will be based on approved FMPs and will follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.
5. Rehabilitation and Restoration - Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health, and safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure.
6. Protection Priorities - The protection of human life is the single, overriding priority. Setting priorities among protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources will be based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection. Once people have been committed to an incident, these human resources become the highest value to be protected.
7. Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) - The operational roles of federal agencies as partners in the WUI are: wildland firefighting, hazardous fuels reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance. Structural fire suppression is the responsibility of tribal, State, or local governments. Federal agencies may assist with exterior structural protection activities under formal Fire Protection Agreements that specify the mutual responsibilities of the partners, including funding. (Some federal agencies have full structural protection authority for their facilities on lands they administer, and may also enter into formal agreements to assist State and local governments with full structural protection).
8. Planning - Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved FMP. FMPs are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires based on the area's approved land management plan. FMPs must provide for firefighter and public safety; include fire management strategies, tactics, and alternatives; address values to be protected and public health issues; and be consistent with resource management objective, activities of the area, and environmental laws and regulations.
9. Science - FMPs and programs will be based on a foundation of sound science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors. Information needed to support fire management will be developed through an integrated interagency fire science program. Scientific results must be made available to managers in a timely manner and must be used in the development of land management plans, FMPs, and implementation plans.
10. Preparedness - Agencies will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective fire management programs in support of land and resource management plans through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment, and management oversight.
11. Suppression - Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety, benefits, and values to be protected, consistent with resource objectives.
12. Prevention - Agencies will work together with local partners and other affected groups and individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.

13. Standardization - Agencies will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms, training and qualification requirements, operational procedures, value-to-be-protected methodologies, and public education programs for all fire management activities.
14. Interagency Cooperation and Coordination - Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, suppression, fire use, restoration and rehabilitation, monitoring, research, and education will be conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of cooperators and partners.
15. Communication and Education - Agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire management policies and practices through internal and external communication and education programs. These programs will be continuously improved through the timely and effective exchange of information among all affected agencies and organizations.
16. Agency Administrators and Employee Roles - Agency administrators will ensure that their employees are trained, certified, and made available to participate in the wildland fire program locally, regionally, and nationally as the situation demands. Employees with operational, administrative, or other skills will support the wildland fire program as necessary. Agency administrators are responsible and will be held accountable for making employees available.
17. Evaluation - Agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to determine effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001 Federal Fire Policy. The evaluation will assure accountability, facilitate resolution of areas of conflict, and identify resource shortages and agency priorities.

The UCR FPU is committed to addressing the 17 policy statements in all FMPs. A tabular crosswalk between the 17 policy statements from the FWFMP and this FMP can be found in Appendix D.

**Key Implementation Actions** - Key implementation actions related to fire management and fire management planning:

1. Incorporate mitigation, burn plan rehabilitation, and fuels reduction and restoration activities that contribute to ecosystem sustainability into FMPs and resource management plans. There is a need to more effectively and directly integrate fire management activities with other natural resource goals.
2. Respond to wildland fires based on approved FMPs and land use plans regardless of ignition source or the location of the ignition. The management response to fires, regardless of source, must be based on the approved FMP. FMPs, based on the land management objectives of the area, guide the appropriate response through criteria and prescriptions.
3. Complete, or update, by the end of FY 2004 FMPs for all areas with burnable vegetation. FMPs, based on the underlying land use plans, are the principle foundation for implementation of the 2001 FWFMP.
4. Consider whether plan amendments are needed to implement the NFP and comply with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy if plans are not undergoing revision in the near future. A FMP in compliance with the Federal Fire Policy must be based on the area's land use plan which identifies the fire management decisions outlined in Appendix C of the Land Use Planning Handbook (H-1601-1). If a land use plan does not identify

the necessary fire decisions and if the plan is not currently scheduled to be revised or replaced, proceed with a land use plan amendment to ensure fire guidance will be in place by the end of FY 2004.

5. Suppress fires in areas without approved FMPs or in areas with FMP that are not consistent with the 2001 Federal Fire Policy.

**How the FMP Implements the Policies of the National Fire Plan and the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy** - Under the FWFMP, Federal land management agencies with vegetation capable of sustaining wildland fire are required to prepare FMPs. The FMP is a strategic plan that defines a program to manage wildland and prescriptive vegetation treatments. The foundation of the FMP is the agency's land use plan. FMPs are dynamic documents that are reviewed annually and updated whenever better information is available. The plan is supplemented by operational plans such as preparedness plans, preplanned dispatch plans, prescribed fire plans, and prevention plans. Development of this collaborative FMP is an essential implementation task and performance measure for accomplishing the goals of the NFP and the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy. The FMP is the on-the-ground, operational framework by which the UCR FPU will implement national direction for: wildland fire suppression, wildland fire use (WFU), fuels treatment, emergency stabilization and rehabilitation (ESR), and community assistance/protection programs.

The FWFMP establishes the concept of Appropriate Management Response (AMR), which is further defined in *The Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* (USDA and USDI, 2003). This policy states: "A wildland fire that is not a prescribed fire requires an AMR. The AMR, which can range from aggressively suppressing the incident as a wildland fire, to managing the incident as a WFU event, is guided by the strategies and objectives outlined in the RMP reflecting land and resource values and objectives. The FMP outlines fire management activities and procedures to accomplish those objectives. The objective of a WFU project is to obtain resource benefits whereas a wildland fire is to be extinguished at minimum cost."

The FWFMP identified the need for a new approach to fire management on federal lands and led to the development of the NFP ([www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov)).

## II.A.2 The National Fire Plan

The Secretaries of USDI and USDA initiated the NFP in 2000 to address the needs identified in the FWFMP. The NFP is not an actual document, but a nationally coordinated effort to protect communities and natural resources from the harmful effects of increasing wildland fire occurrence and severity in the United States. The NFP establishes the overarching purpose and goals, which are articulated and carried forward through the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (USDI, USDA 2001), the Cohesive Strategy for Protecting People and Sustaining Natural Resources (USDA 2000), and other supporting documents.

### THE NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

Working with Congress, the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior jointly developed the National Fire Plan to respond to severe wildland fires, reduce their impacts on communities, and assure sufficient firefighting capabilities for the future. The National Fire Plan is a long-term investment that will help protect communities and natural resources, and most importantly, the lives of firefighters and the public.

#### Key Points of the National Fire Plan

Firefighting: Maintain a cost effective level of preparedness in firefighting and prevention.

Rehabilitation and Restoration: Rehabilitate fire damaged wildlands and restore high-risk ecosystems.

Hazardous Fuels Reduction: Invest in projects to reduce fire risk with focused effort in wildland urban interface areas.

Community Assistance: Work with communities to reduce the risks of catastrophic fire.

Accountability: Establish and maintain a high level of accountability including oversight reviews, progress tracking and performance monitoring.

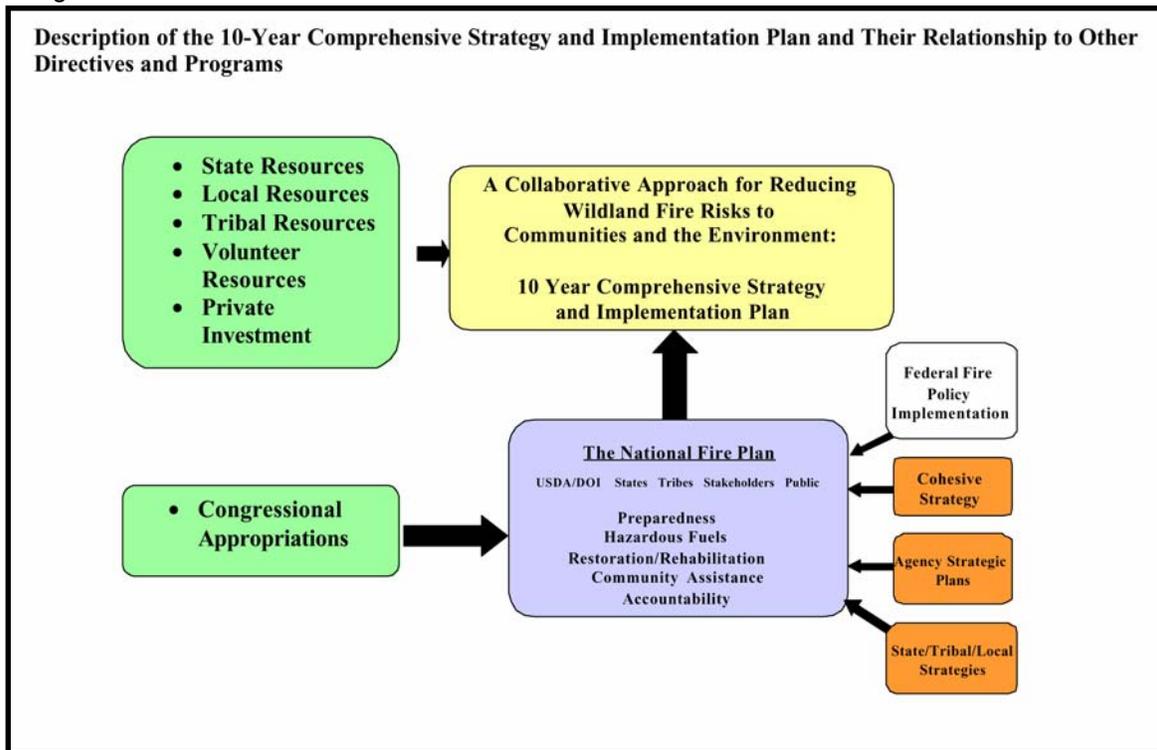
<http://www.fireplan.gov/>

### II.A.3 A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment - The 10 Year Comprehensive Strategy

The 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy (<http://www.fireplan.gov/reports/7-19-en.pdf>) was prepared in 2001 by the USDI, USDA, and the Western Governor’s Association to provide a more detailed framework for accomplishing the goals of the NFP. The 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy reflects the views of a broad cross-section of governmental and nongovernmental stakeholders.

Successful implementation of the *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy* requires a collaborative process among multiple levels of government and a range of interests.

Figure - II.A.3



### II.A.4 The Cohesive Strategy for Protecting People and Sustaining Natural Resources

The Cohesive Strategy for Protecting People and Sustaining Natural Resources was prepared in 2000 by the USDA. It projects the quantity and rate of fuels reduction treatments required on a landscape scale to restore fire-adapted ecosystems and protect communities from increasing wildland fire. The Cohesive Strategy estimates fuels reduction treatments needing to increase fivefold in order to achieve these goals. It also concludes that treatments are needed both within and outside the WUI.

**Fire Regime Condition Class** - The Cohesive Strategy establishes a classification system, known as the Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC), which describes the amount of departure of an area or landscape from the historic to present conditions. This departure from the natural state may be a result of changes in one or more ecosystem components such as fuel composition, fire frequency, or other ecological disturbances. As mandated by national direction,

this FMP utilizes the FRCC classification system to rank existing ecosystem conditions and prioritize areas for treatment. As taken from the Cohesive Implementation Strategy, FRCC is defined as follows:

Fire Regime Condition Class 1 (CC1): Fire regimes in this condition class are within historical ranges. Thus, the risk of losing key ecosystem components from the occurrence of fire remains relatively low. Maintenance management such as prescribed fire, mechanical treatments, or preventing the invasion of non-native weeds, is required to prevent these lands from becoming degraded. Approximately 18% (106,431 acres) of the GSFO managed public lands are classified as CC1.

Fire Regime Condition Class 2 (CC2): Fire regimes on these lands have been moderately altered from their historical range by either increased or decreased fire frequency. A moderate risk of losing key ecosystem components has been identified in these lands. To restore their historical fire regimes, these lands may require some level of restoration as through prescribed fire, mechanical or chemical treatments, and the subsequent reintroduction of native plants. Approximately 82% (484,855 acres) of the GSFO managed public lands are classified as CC2.

Fire Regime Condition Class 3 (CC3): These lands have been significantly altered from their historical range. Because fire regimes have been extensively altered, risk of losing key ecosystem components from fire is high. Consequently, these lands verge on the greatest risk of ecological collapse. To restore their historical fire regimes before prescribed fire can be utilized to manage fuel or obtain other desired benefits these lands may require multiple mechanical or chemical restoration treatments, or reseeding.

As noted above, approximately 98% of the GSFO managed acres are classified as CC1, CC2, or CC3, with the remaining 2% of the area consisting of non-vegetative landscape (e.g., water and rock outcrops).

**Historic Fire Regime** - The Cohesive Strategy utilizes the concept of Historic Fire Regime (HFR). These regimes represent fire intervals prior to Euro-American settlement and are calculated and classified by analyzing natural vegetation, known fire cycles, and fire history data (Table A). Based on the FRCC and HFR classifications, the Cohesive Strategy established the following national priorities for implementing vegetation treatments:

- Treat vegetation types within HFR Groups I, II, and III,
- Treat lands that have been either significantly altered (CC3) or moderately altered (CC2) from their historic range, and
- Treat at least 2% of an agency's administered lands annually.

## **II.A.5 National BLM Special Status Species Policy**

It is national policy to:

1. Conserve federally listed and proposed threatened or endangered species and the habitats on which they depend.
2. Ensure that actions requiring authorization or approval by the BLM are consistent with the conservation needs of special status species (SSS) and do not contribute to the need to list any SSS, either under provisions of the ESA or other provisions of this policy.

The terms conserve and conservation in this national policy and pursuant to the ESA are defined as the use of all methods and procedures necessary to improve the status of federally listed species and their habitats to a point where the provisions of the ESA are no longer necessary.

Fire management planning and activities on site-specific projects should consider the following where ESA species occur:

1. Recovery or conservation plans and activities that promote species recovery in the SFO.

2. Terms and conditions of consultation with the USFWS, NOAA Fisheries, and IDFG to promote species recovery in the SFO.
3. Where and how fire management activities can conserve SSS, especially ESA listed proposed and candidate species.

## II.A.6 The Wilderness Act of 1964

The Wilderness Act provisions apply to all fire management activities undertaken on wilderness lands. The Wilderness Act states that "... measures may be taken as may be necessary in the control of fire...". The act also generally prohibits motorized equipment or mechanized transport in designated wilderness areas; however it allows them "as necessary to meet minimum requirements for the administration for the area for the purposes of this act."

Fire and fuels management actions will meet the non-impairment mandate for wilderness study areas (WSAs). In WSAs fire and fuels management will strive to avoid unnecessary impairment that would affect the suitability toward wilderness designation of these areas. The ultimate goal would be to allow fire to play its natural role in these ecosystems.

## II.B. Colorado State Guidance

In January 1997 the Colorado Bureau of Land Management (BLM) approved the Standards for Public Land Health (<http://www.co.blm.gov/standguide.htm>) and amended all RMPs in the State. Standards describe the conditions needed to sustain public land health and apply to all uses of public lands. These standards cover upland soils, riparian systems, plant and animal communities, threatened and endangered species, and water quality. Standards describe conditions needed to sustain public land health and relate to all uses of the public lands.

Standard 1: *Upland* soils exhibit infiltration and permeability rates that are appropriate to soil type, climate, land form, and geologic processes. Adequate soil infiltration and permeability allows for the accumulation of soil moisture necessary for optimal plant growth and vigor, and minimizes surface runoff.

Standard 2: Riparian systems associated with both running and standing water function properly and have the ability to recover from major disturbance such as fire, severe grazing, or 100-year floods. Riparian vegetation captures sediment, and provides forage, habitat and bio-diversity. Water quality is improved or maintained. Stable soils store and release water slowly.

Standard 3: Healthy, productive plant and animal communities of native and other desirable species are maintained at viable population levels commensurate with the species and habitat's potential. Plants and animals at both the community and population level are productive, resilient, diverse, vigorous, and able to reproduce and sustain natural fluctuations, and ecological processes.

Standard 4: Special status, threatened and endangered species (federal and state), and other plants and animals officially designated by the BLM, and their habitats are maintained or enhanced by sustaining healthy, native plant and animal communities.

Standard 5: The water quality of all water bodies, including ground water where applicable, located on or influenced by BLM lands will achieve or exceed the Water Quality Standards established by the State of Colorado. Water Quality Standards for surface and ground waters include the designated beneficial uses, numeric criteria, narrative criteria, and anti-

degradation requirements set forth under State law as found in (5 CCR 1002-8), as required by Section 303(c) of the Clean Water Act.

## II.C. Land Use Plan Guidance

**GSFO RMP Resource Program Direction** - The GSFO RMP addresses a wide range of resources, management programs and issues and contains a comprehensive description of resource considerations. The following are major RMP decisions that fire management strategies can help achieve.

- maintain or increase wildlife populations
- stabilize grazing operations
- protect critical watersheds
- protect visual resources

In March of 1999 the *Oil and Gas Leasing & Development Final Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement – Record of Decision* amended the GSFO RMP. Although the lease stipulations and Conditions of Approval (COAs) were developed to apply to oil and gas leasing and development, it is intended that the same or similar measures be applied to other public land uses in order to maintain or achieve the same resource conditions. The FMP identifies administrative measures and constraints needed to apply comparable measures to wildland fire management and prescriptive vegetation treatments. Specific guidelines for wildland fire suppression and prescriptive vegetation treatments can be found in III.D.2-3 and IV.C.1.4, respectively.

**GSFO Fire Program Direction** - The 2002 land use plan amendment (EA # CO 140-2001-0051) ([http://www.co.blm.gov/gsra/documents/FMP\\_EA\\_signed\\_version.pdf](http://www.co.blm.gov/gsra/documents/FMP_EA_signed_version.pdf)) for this FMP complemented the decisions in the GSFO RMP and provides the specific fire program direction to help achieve National and RMP goals and objectives.

