

Wildland Fire Use

- Wildland Fire Use definition: the management of naturally-ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific pre-stated resource management objectives (prescriptions) in pre-defined geographic areas outlined in Fire Management Plans. With the revision of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy in 1995, Prescribed Natural Fire became known as Wildland Fire Use.
- Wildland Fire Use fires are used for a variety of resource benefits; these benefits include the maintenance of healthy forests, rangelands, and wetlands and the support of ecosystem diversity.
- Under current policy, only naturally-ignited fires (those started by lightning and lava) are permissible sources for Wildland Fire Use. Human-ignited wildfires, including arson or escaped prescribed fires, receive an appropriate management response for suppression.
- Wildland Fire Use requires an approved Fire Management Plan. When no plan is in place, the fire is suppressed. The process for creating a Fire Management Plan includes appropriate public review, with boundaries explaining why the

strategy is appropriate. Appropriate areas must meet certain criteria:

- Vegetation communities and fuels conditions must exist in an appropriate condition for wildland fire to be used without harming natural balances.
- Area must be large enough to support fire spread under anticipated conditions.
- Reintroduces natural variability of fire intensity (from low ground fires to stand replacing crown fires) as fires burn through diurnal cycles of weather conditions.
- Areas of minimal human interaction where visitation and occupancy can be restricted during periods of greatest fire spread.
- Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is an operational plan for Wildland Fire Use. It includes implementation actions, predictions for fire behavior, and risk assessment. Risk assessment is critical to supporting the initial decision as well as subsequent decisions concerning implementation.
- Wildland Fire Use requires designation of a Maximum

Manageable Area (MMA) as Stage III of the WFIP is developed. The MMA delineates the ultimate acceptable size and location of the fire and may be predetermined in a Fire Management Plan. The MMA serves as a definition of management capability to accommodate acceptable social, political, and resource impacts of fire within the defined area.

- During the 1970s, there were Wildland Fire Use programs in California, Arizona, Idaho, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado, and Florida. By 2001, it included those states, as well as Washington, Oregon, North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota, Michigan, Utah, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, Arkansas, Kentucky, Tennessee, Alaska, and Georgia.
- Monitoring is a high priority in Wildland Fire Use to ensure that the fire stays within boundaries and meets objectives (prescription).
- Properties that may be impacted by Wildland Fire Use include mining claims, administrative sites, and remote homesteads. Structure and sites on these sites may be protected through various means during Wildland Fire Use, including wrapping

with fire resistant material, fuel reduction, and water/re-tardant drops. Management actions planned on private property must have owner agreement.

- Wildland Fire Use provides an educational opportunity to the public to view fire in its natural role in the ecosystem. In some areas, tours or viewing areas may be provided.
- Candidates for Wildland Fire Use areas include Wilderness Areas, Wilderness Study Areas, natural areas, and undeveloped areas. These offer the greatest opportunity to minimize human/fire interaction.
- Areas that have been doing Wildland Fire Use for a long time have shown or demonstrated a reduction in the risk of large-scale fire as the dynamics of wild-land fire are reduced due to successional mosaic. Some of the areas with long-term Wildland Fire Use programs include:

- Gila Wilderness – New Mexico
- Yosemite National Park – California
- Bob Marshall – Frank Church Wilderness – Idaho/Montana
- Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks – California
- Selway – Bitterroot Wilderness – Idaho/Montana
- Glacier National Park – Montana
- Everglades National Park – Florida
- Yellowstone National Park – Wyoming
- Okefenokee National Wildlife Refuge – Georgia
- Wildland Fire Use is often a long duration event which requires public understanding of smoke events, temporary inconveniences regarding travel, and potential closure of public use areas.
- Wildland Fire Use can be applied to all fire regimes (I-V) and condition classes (1-3). The majority of WFU occurs in Condition Class 1, though it converges with Condition Class 2, bringing it back to Condition Class 1.

Condition Classes

- Condition Class 1 – Fire regimes within historical range, the risk of losing key ecosystem components is low.
- Condition Class 2 – Fire regimes have been moderately altered from historical range, the risk of losing key ecosystem components is moderate. Fire frequencies are one or more fire return intervals away from historical frequencies.
- Condition Class 3 – Fire regimes have been significantly altered from their historical range, the risk of losing key ecosystem components is high. Fire frequencies are multiple return intervals away from historical frequencies. Vegetation attributes have been significantly altered from their historic range.