

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006



FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS 2006 ACTION PLAN

INTRODUCTION:

The *Federal Fire and Aviation Operations Action Plan* provides the Chief of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Forest Service and the Secretary of the Department of the Interior (DOI) direction for the 2006 fire season and support to the National Response Plan (NRP). The plan introduces operational expectations, reinforces performance expectations and clarifies existing policies and procedures. It further establishes consistent implementation of policy by agency administrators, incident management/area command teams, and fire and aviation management personnel. Finally, the plan responds to administration goals of fiscal integrity and the agencies' goals to deliver a safe, effective fire and aviation management program.

This plan incorporates lessons learned, after-action assessments, and formal reviews following the 2005 wildland fire and hurricane responses. It incorporates recommendations from the national interagency cost oversight teams and is consistent with agency direction for hazard abatement plans, the National Fire Plan (NFP), and the NRP.

The plan focuses attention on six areas:

- *Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Implementation*
- *Wildland fire operations and aviation safety*
- *Preparedness, suppression operations and Wildland Fire Use*
- *Support to the National Response Plan*
- *Cost containment*
- *Hazardous fuel treatments*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

PRIORITIES:

The primary responsibility of the wildland fire agencies is response to wildland fire. When competition for wildland fire resources occurs among Geographic Areas, the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group (NMAC) will establish national priorities. In accordance with the National Response Plan, wildland fire agencies may receive requests for resources for non-fire incidents. In general, resources necessary to respond to wildland fire will receive first priority. When competition for wildland fire resources occurs between wildland fire and non-wildland fire incidents, the NMAC will recommend priorities for the appropriate allocation of those resources.

The single, overriding priority is the protection of human life – both of our firefighters and the public.

In setting national priorities, the NMAC will consider these criteria:

- *Maintain Geographic Area initial attack capability*
- *Protect communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources*
- *Limit costs without compromising safety*
- *Meet local agency objectives.*

Suppression strategies are chosen to minimize costs without compromising safety.

BACKGROUND:

Firefighters contained more than 98 percent of all new wildfires during initial action in 2005. The wildfires that escaped initial action and burned over 300 acres accounted for the bulk of acres burned and approximately 90% of all suppression expenditures. 2005 ranked fourth in the number of wildland fire starts and third in the number of acres burned in the last five years.

The record setting 2005 hurricane season impacted the wildland fire community in many ways. Fifty Type 1 and thirty-nine Type 2 assignments and reassignments resulted in over 250,000 individual work days.

SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT:

The situational assessment is a projection of the wildland fire season severity and is located at: <http://www.nifc.gov/nicc/predictive/outlooks/outlooks.htm>

In May and August the Climate Prediction Center posts the Hurricane Outlook Discussion, analyzing climate influences on and expected hurricane activity for the Atlantic and Caribbean basins from June to November. The 2006 hurricane predictions are located at: <http://www.cpc.ncep.noaa.gov/products/outlooks/hurricane-archive.shtml>

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

FEDERAL WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

CONSISTENT POLICY IMPLEMENTATION:

In 2001, an update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy was completed and approved by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture. On April 21, 2004 the Secretaries approved the "Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Policy". This document directs the agencies to complete policy implementation by cooperatively developing common language and unified guidance and incorporating this direction for all agencies in manuals, handbooks and guidelines.

Federal wildland fire management policy information is located at:

http://www.nifc.gov/fire_policy

Operational Clarification for Consistent Wildland Fire Management Policy Implementation

Several operational differences previously existed among the federal wildland fire management agencies eliciting needed discussion and consensus on the following clarification statements:

- *Only one management objective will be applied to a wildland fire. Wildland fires will either be managed for resource benefits or suppressed. A wildland fire cannot be managed for both objectives concurrently. If two wildland fires converge, they will be managed as a single wildland fire.*
- *Human caused wildfires will be suppressed in every instance and will not be managed for resource benefits.*
- *Once a wildland fire has been managed for suppression objectives, it may never be managed for resource benefit objectives.*
- *The Appropriate Management Response (AMR) is any specific action suitable to meet Fire Management Unit (FMU) objectives. Typically, the AMR ranges across a spectrum of tactical options (from monitoring to intensive management actions). The AMR is developed by using FMU strategies and objectives identified in the Fire Management Plan.*
- *The Wildland Fire Situation Analysis process is used to determine and document the suppression strategy from the full range of responses available for suppression operations. Suppression strategies are designed to meet the policy objectives of suppression. (See page 32 of the Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy for the suppression policy objectives.)*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

- *Wildland fire use is the result of a natural event. The Land/Resource Management Plan, or the Fire Management Plan, will identify areas where the strategy of wildland fire use is suitable. The Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) is the tool that examines the available response strategies to determine if a fire is being considered for wildland fire use.*
- *When a prescribed fire or a fire designated for wildland fire use is no longer achieving the intended resource management objectives and contingency or mitigation actions have failed, the fire will be declared a wildfire. Once a wildfire, it cannot be returned to a prescribed fire or wildland fire use status.*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

COMMON TERMS AND DEFINITIONS:

The Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy directs agencies to establish common terms and definitions. The newly updated National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) Glossary of Wildland Fire Terminology is the only authorized source of terms and definitions that meet federal fire management policy. The glossary can be found at: www.nwcg.gov/

The strategy defines three kinds of wildland fire:

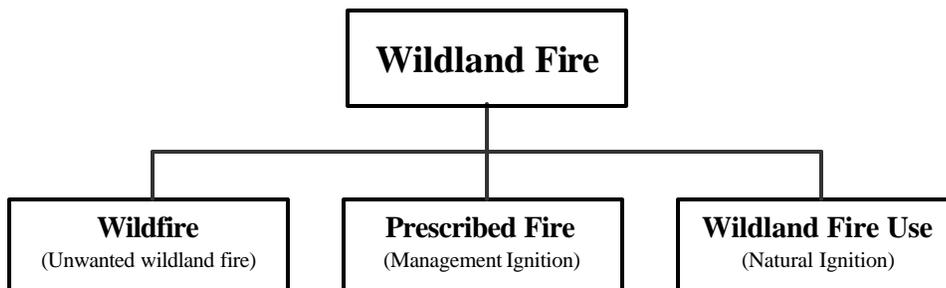
Wildland Fire. Any non-structure fire, that occurs in the wildland. Three distinct types of wildland fire have been defined and include **wildfire**, **wildland fire use** and **prescribed fire**.

Wildfire. An unplanned, unwanted wildland fire, including unauthorized human-caused fires, escaped wildland fire use events, escaped prescribed fire projects, and all other wildland fires where the objective is to put the fire out.

Wildland Fire Use. The application of the appropriate management response to naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives in predefined designated areas outlined in Fire Management Plans.

Prescribed Fire. Any fire ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives. A written, approved prescribed fire plan must exist, and NEPA requirements (where applicable) must be met, prior to ignition.

The following diagram depicts the relationship between these terms:



FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

WILDLAND FIRE OPERATIONS AND AVIATION SAFETY

Policy: “Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All Fire Management Plans and activities must reflect this commitment.”¹

Principles:

- *Firefighter safety comes first on every wildland fire, every time.*
- *Every firefighter has the right to a safe assignment.*
- *Every Agency Administrator, every wildland fire manager, every fireline supervisor, and every firefighter is responsible to ensure that established safe practices are known and observed.*

Intent: Firefighter safety is the first priority. Firefighter safety is a core value and will not be compromised during fire operations. Operational actions must be based on a sound risk management decision-making process where constant evaluation, risk assessments, and mitigation measures consider the probabilities of exposure, long-term consequences and wildland fire behavior trends.

Everyone has a role in wildland fire and aviation operations safety. Discussions about the responsibilities and expectations that surround firefighting safety must be addressed in pre-season preparedness meetings and annual fireline safety refresher training.

Objective: Implement established safe operating practices on every incident.

Direction:

- *Incident Commanders MUST define clear and concise control objectives (e.g. road, river, fuel type break, or other perimeter objective). This is critical during initial/extended attack actions as a means of recognizing and acting in response to an escalating fire behavior. When control objectives are exceeded, fireline supervisors must immediately delay, modify, or abandon any firefighting action. Fireline supervisors will assess the new situation, form a plan that mitigates identified risks, brief the firefighters on strategy/tactical change, and implement appropriate actions.*
- *Continue the implementation of agency-specific hazard abatement plans as appropriate.*
- *Continue implementation of the federally mandatory conversion to a narrowband radio system that addresses identified safety concerns of fireline and aviation resources. Short term and long term strategies were developed. It is imperative that all firefighting personnel receive new narrowband radio training. For more radio and training information see: <http://radios.nifc.gov>*
- *Unit preparedness in management oversight, supervisory control, and crew levels will be commensurate with observed and predicted fire danger. Ensure leadership, supervision, and operational capacities are not over-extended.*

Direction Cont'd:

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

- *All personnel involved in wildland fire operations will be closely monitored for cumulative and acute fatigue. Fatigue countermeasures will be implemented to ensure firefighter effectiveness and safety. Incident operations driving and hours of work will comply with the standards found in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NFES 2724) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Management and Operations Guide.*
- *Appropriate span of control will be maintained for managers, supervisors, and firefighters at a ratio commensurate to the incident and unit wildland fire situation, magnitude, and complexity.*
- *It is paramount to use the NWCG Risk Management Process as identified in the NWCG Incident Response Pocket Guide (IRPG) and NWCG Fire Line Handbook in every wildland fire operation. Violation of established safe operating practices and procedures may be grounds for disciplinary action.*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

PREPAREDNESS, SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS AND WILDLAND FIRE USE

Policy: “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.”²

Principle: Where hazardous fuels dominate the landscape, establish a strong, decisive initial action capability as a key component in minimizing large wildfire suppression costs. As fire danger levels increase and suppression resources become scarce, initial action capacity must be maintained as the most effective means of preventing new costly wildfires.

Intent: Initial and extended attack operations will generally take mobilization priority over large wildland fires. Predictive services information is used to anticipate threats, and pre-position protection resources accordingly.

All-hazard incident requirements may present elevated competition for resources that challenge managers’ ability to meet preparedness objectives. Drawdown levels must be established and monitored to assist in decision making.

“Wildland Fire Use, based on Federal Fire Policy direction, is a direct component of wildland fire management. It is a management action equal to wildfire suppression and thus, constitutes an emergency action.”³ Wildland Fire Use is considered as an Appropriate Management Response and considered when establishing draw down levels.

Critical resources may be allocated and reallocated by the National Multi-agency Coordination Group (NMAC) as early as Preparedness Level 1, based on predictive models, prioritization criteria, and strategic decision points.

All units will be trained, staffed and ready to meet operational requirements. Staffing levels will be adjusted based on observed and predicted wildland fire danger in order to maintain protection capabilities. Staffing levels will be coordinated with adjacent cooperators.

Personnel will be trained, qualified, and certified for the positions that they are assigned. All federal employees will be available to support wildland fire emergencies as qualified.

Objective: The USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior agencies will establish preparedness staffing levels designed to achieve the greatest effectiveness of initial action response considering anticipated threats and cooperator capabilities.

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

Direction:

- *Fire Management Plans will be updated using the Interagency Fire Management Plan Template.*
- *Effective organizational capability is sustained by maintaining management, supervisory, and crew staffing levels and qualifications. Coaches or mentors will be pre-identified for support where they may be needed.*
- *Managers will assure personnel assigned to wildland fire duty are appropriately trained, qualified and physically fit prior to their deployment.*
- *Staffing levels and drawdown plans will be adjusted based on observed and predicted wildland fire danger.*
- *Severity funding requests will be submitted and approved following the Interagency Fire Severity Funding request format and guidelines found in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NFES 2724) and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Management and Operations Guide. Severity requests will be coordinated with cooperators to most effectively maintain management oversight, supervisory controls and resource capabilities.*
- *Units will prepare to hire and train AD employees and local/volunteer fire department personnel for local and, as appropriate, national needs. Training and availability of State and local fire departments including volunteers will be coordinated on an interagency basis.*
- *Type 3 Incident Management Organizations will be formed at the local level prior to anticipated fire activity and used as appropriate. This may reduce the need for Type 1 and 2 Incident Management Team (IMTs) assignments. These organizations will be developed with full consideration of all interagency resources including local and Tribal cooperators.*
- *NMAC, GMAC, and Agency Administrators will manage IMTs and other national resources to maximize their availability and flexibility for assignments including all-hazard incidents. Some techniques to be considered include:*
 - *Increasing span of control by branching assigned Incident Management/Area Command Teams.*
 - *Releasing or transitioning IMTs at the point of incident containment with the concurrence from the Agency Administrator.*
 - *Consider costs and values at risk in developing strategies such as point source protection versus full perimeter control.*
 - *Alternative approaches to achieving mop-up.*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

Direction Cont'd:

- *Preparedness Plans, Mutual Threat Plans, Memorandums of Understanding, Cost Share Agreements, and other plans will be reviewed and updated prior to the fire season.*
- *Multi-agency Coordinating Group (MAC) members will be pre-identified and should include individuals with coordination and command experience. National Weather Service and Predictive Services support will be active as conditions warrant. MAC groups will establish prioritization criteria for incident allocation and reallocation of resources well ahead of anticipated fire activity. Agency Administrators will provide a formal Delegation of Authority to MAC Groups that includes agency objectives and expectations and clear prioritization criteria.*
- *Service and Supply Plans will be completed and associated Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements (EERA) will be in place prior to anticipated fire activity.*
- *Pre-season simulations including Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) development will be conducted.*
- *Wildfire prevention plans and activities should address the increasing threat of human caused fires. Fire Prevention Education Teams should be used when appropriate.*
- *Cost efficiencies must be considered when pre-positioning and mobilizing resources.*
- *Incident Commanders MUST define clear and concise control objectives on every wildfire. This is particularly critical during Type 5/4/3 incident operations as a means of recognizing escalating wildfire behavior.*
- *Airtankers will be pre-positioned by Geographic Area MAC/NMAC based on projected wildland fire danger levels and values to be protected.*
- *Airtankers will be used primarily for initial and extended action except when lives or communities are at risk. The decision to use airtankers on large wildland fires will be determined on a case-by-case basis.*
- *NMAC will communicate the rationale for actions taken in the event that competition for resources exceeds capability. The target audience for distribution is Federal and State delegations, media, Agency Administrators, and the fire management community.*

WILDFIRE COST CONTAINMENT

Policy: ‘Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety, benefits, and values to be protected, consistent with resource objectives.’⁴

Principle: Agency Administrator oversight and involvement during the decision-making process is critical for containing suppression costs.

Intent: In order to address large fire costs in 2005, the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) commissioned seven multi-agency multi-disciplinary Cost Action Teams to examine selected recommendations for reducing the cost for large fire suppression efforts. The teams sorted the recommendations into four logical strategic initiatives:

- Reducing costs by considering them in suppression decisions.
- Reducing costs by increasing suppression effectiveness.
- Reduce large fire suppression costs by recognizing them in all planning decisions.
- Developing the frame work to increase suppression performance and accountability.

These initiatives have been refined into numerous solution approaches and continue to be implemented to enhance large fire cost containment efforts.

The primary factor for selecting a suppression strategy is to minimize costs without compromising safety. Planned and actual suppression costs must also be commensurate with the values to be protected and must be included and displayed in the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA).

It is inappropriate to use suppression funds with the explicit objective of managing a wildfire to achieve resource benefits even though resource benefits may result in some fire areas.

Indirect suppression strategies are viable alternatives in many situations. Prior to selecting such a strategy effects on safety, cost and escape potential must be thoroughly considered. When wildland fire behavior trends are rising, the selection of these strategies must be especially scrutinized.

Objective: Expend only those funds required for the safe, cost-effective suppression of the wildfire incident.

Direction:

- *Agency Administrators are responsible for financial oversight. This responsibility cannot be delegated. See Table 1 following this section for approval thresholds. In certifying suppression costs, decision-makers share the fiscal accountability associated with outcomes.*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

Direction Cont'd:

- *Maintain the ability to perform large fire cost oversight.*
- *When wildland fire behavior trends are rising, the long-term consequences of indirect suppression strategies including final wildfire cost will be considered in the initial action decision.*
- *Produce WFSAs alternatives displaying a full range of AMR options. All alternatives must include strong emphasis on cost accountability based on the values to be protected with due consideration given to a minimum cost alternative.*
- *A suppression cost objective will be included in the Delegation of Authority to the Incident Commander. Revision or amendment of the WFSAs is required if incident cost objectives exceeded those in the WFSAs.*
- *Incident suppression cost objectives will be included as a performance measure in Incident Management Team evaluations.*
- *Type 3 Organizations should be used when appropriate to reduce overall suppression costs.*
- *NMAC, GMAC, and Agency Administrators will consider additional cost containment tactics such as:*
 - *Increasing span of control by branching assigned Incident Management/Area Command Teams.*
 - *Releasing or transitioning IMTs at the point of incident containment with the concurrence from the Agency Administrator.*
 - *Consider costs and values at risk in developing strategies such as point source protection versus full perimeter control.*
 - *Consider alternative methods to achieve mop-up.*
- *National Interagency Cost Oversight Teams will evaluate long-duration wildfires where large numbers of firefighting resources are being committed.*
- *An Incident Business Advisor (IBA) must be assigned to any wildfire with projected suppression costs of more than \$5 million. An IBA is advised for wildfires with suppression costs of \$1 to \$5 million. If a certified IBA is not available, the approving official will appoint a financial advisor to monitor expenditures. The IBA reports directly to the responsible Agency Administrator.*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

Direction Cont'd:

- *Wildfires involving multiple jurisdictions require mutually approved cost apportionment agreements. These agreements should be implemented by the Incident/Area Commander based upon direction specified in the Delegation of Authority. WFSA funding approval levels for multiple jurisdictional incidents are determined based on each agency's funding commitment for a WFSA and **not** the total funding of the WFSA.*

Table 1: Agency Administrator WFSA Approval and Certification Thresholds

	<i>BIA</i>	<i>BLM</i>	<i>FWS</i>	<i>NPS</i>	<i>USDA-FS</i>
<i>Local Approval Level</i>	<i>\$2,000,000 Agency Superintendent</i>	<i>\$2,000,000 Field/District Manager</i>	<i>\$2,000,000 Refuge Manager/ Project Leader</i>	<i>\$2,000,000 Park Superintendent</i>	<i>\$2,000,000 District Ranger \$2,000,000- \$10,000,000 Forest Supervisor</i>
<i>Regional/ State Certification Level</i>	<i>\$2,000,000- \$5,000,000 Regional Director</i>	<i>\$2,000,000- \$5,000,000 State Director</i>	<i>\$2,000,000- \$5,000,000 Regional Director</i>	<i>\$2,000,000- \$5,000,000 Regional Director</i>	<i>\$10,000,000- \$50,000,000 Regional Forester</i>
<i>National Certification Level</i>	<i>More than \$5,000,000 Director</i>	<i>More than \$5,000,000 Director</i>	<i>More than \$5,000,000 Director</i>	<i>More than \$5,000,000 Director</i>	<i>More than \$50,000,000 Chief</i>

HAZARDOUS FUELS TREATMENTS

Policy: “Hazardous fuels are treated, using appropriate tools, to reduce the risk of unplanned and unwanted wildland fire to communities and the environment.”⁵

Principle: The most effective means of reducing large wildfire suppression costs, protecting community values, restoring forest and grassland health, and improving firefighter safety, is an aggressive fuel treatment program. Treatments are particularly important in fire-dependent ecosystems, where prolonged fire exclusion has resulted in excess fuels. The agencies will continue to emphasize fuel treatments in high priority areas where communities, watersheds, and critical resources are at risk.

Intent: The President’s Healthy Forests Initiative, the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, the Healthy Forests Restoration Act and the National Fire Plan establish goals for reducing hazardous fuels. Reducing risk to firefighters, communities, municipal watersheds and restoring the health of public and tribal lands are the central themes of these initiatives.

The safest, most effective wildland fire management strategy is predicated on an aggressive fuels reduction program using a variety of mitigation methods including mechanical, biological, chemical, and prescribed fire. In fire-dependent ecosystems the use of prescribed fire and wildland fire use at ecologically appropriate intensities, is an essential means of restoring forest health conditions. Mechanical hazard mitigation treatments may often be required before prescribed fire projects can be implemented within acceptable limits of social, economic, and ecological risk.

Prescribed fires and wildland fire use incidents that aim to achieve resource benefits must be accompanied by supporting NEPA compliant plans.

Objective: Treat approximately 2.9 million acres of hazardous fuels on federal and tribal lands for FY06.

Direction:

- *A high priority will be given to achieving fuels treatment projects through the fire season.*
- *Agencies and regions may redistribute targets and funds between them in order to maximize project accomplishments.*
- *Identification of FY07 hazardous fuels projects will be completed by May 1, 2006, using an established collaborative process with federal, tribal, state and local governments as well as stakeholders to identify and prioritize fuels treatments.*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL RESPONSE PLAN (NRP)

Policy: The Homeland Security Act of 2002 (Public Law 107-296) established the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) with the mandate and legal authority to protect the American people from the continuing threat of terrorism. In the Act, Congress also assigned DHS as the primary focal point regarding natural and manmade crises and emergency planning.

As required by Homeland Security Presidential Directives – 5, Federal departments and agencies will provide cooperation, resources, and support to the Secretary of Homeland Security in the implementation of the National Response Plan (NRP).

Principle: Federal wildland fire agencies will support NRP taskings as appropriate and consistent with their own authorities and responsibilities for preparing for and responding to wildland fires.

Intent: The primary mission for the agency fire programs is preparedness for and response to wildland fires. Wildland fire management resources will be available for response to non-fire incidents under the NRP in accordance with Department of the Interior and Department of Agriculture commitments in the NRP.

Requests for wildland fire resources will be evaluated against potential consequences to satisfactorily fulfilling the Departments' primary wildland fire program responsibilities. When necessary, the Department of the Interior and the USDA Forest Service will consult to identify alternative solutions to meeting the requests for resources to respond to non-fire incidents under the NRP.

Objective: Provide wildland fire resources to meet NRP emergency response needs safely without compromising agency capacity to appropriately manage wildland fire.

Direction:

- *Continue to train and mentor other emergency responder entities in the National Incident Management System (NIMS) to improve their response capability.*
- *Limit wildland fire resource activities to the response phase of an emergency as feasible.*
- *Coordinate with FEMA through ESF-4 to allow wildland fire agencies the authority to identify appropriate responses and alternatives to requested taskings.*
- *Develop a communications strategy to work more effectively with other federal agencies as response activities elevate to a NRP status and Joint Information Centers are established.*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

Direction Cont'd:

- *NMAC and GMAC will establish and monitor drawdown thresholds for critical resources.*
- *A Geographic Area with a high level of activity may offer a GMAC representative to assist the NMAC or request an NMAC representative travel to the GMAC to assist with issues.*
- *If possible, ensure that NRP assignment safety concerns are identified and communicated to responders prior to deployment. Each Agency's Safety and Health standards and policies apply to NRP response operations. NMAC will utilize the Federal Fire and Aviation Safety Team (FFAST) to coordinate safety issues for efficient identification, resolution, and communication.*
- *Evaluate physical fitness requirements for each firefighting position prior to deployment. Federal responders will meet NWCG, 310-1 position fitness requirements for 310-1 positions.*
- *Agency Administrators, with advice from the NMAC and GMAC will evaluate and balance the competing requirements for wildland fire resources for NRP and fire management incidents. Within the Department of the Interior, the Office of Wildland Fire Coordination is responsible for coordination, recommendations, and decisions between the NMAC and Agency Administrators. Within the Department of Agriculture, Fire and Aviation Management is responsible for coordination, recommendations, and decisions between the NMAC and Agency Administrators.*

FEDERAL FIRE & AVIATION OPERATIONS ACTION PLAN 2006

SUMMARY:

The federal wildland fire management program is among the most challenging of all natural resource activities. Not only are public lands at stake, but the health and safety of employees and communities are also affected by what we do and don't do. These challenges can only be managed successfully with adherence to established safe practices and procedures, attention to critical wildland fire behavior risk thresholds and sound judgment. At the peak of activity when suppression needs are great and resource levels are diminishing agency administrators and wildland fire managers must maintain a high level of situational awareness, anticipate needs, and actively lead.

Over the long-term, an aggressive fuel treatment program is the surest means of providing for firefighter and public safety, reducing wildfire costs, and restoring healthy, resilient forests and grasslands (*Wildfire Suppression: Strategies for Containing Costs, NAPA Report, 09/02*).

Fire management programs must continue to pursue an accelerated fuels treatment program and seek funding sources for projects focused on the restoration of fire-dependent ecosystems. Programs should strive to better integrate fuels management for forest and range health and the protection of wildlife, watersheds, and other resources.

The traditional role of the wildland fire community is changing as agencies are relied on to support non-fire incidents. Support to the NRP will be a growing consideration in allocation of agency resources. Based on fire and hurricane season predictions, the 2006 season may provide additional challenges to meeting resource needs for both wildland fire and all-hazard incident response. In preparation for the 2006 fire season, we must commit to reducing suppression costs and being prepared to respond to wildland fires without compromising firefighter and public safety.

The steps outlined in this action plan are intended to increase margins of safety and preparedness with the aim of managing finite resources to meet wildland fire and NRP assignments. This action plan also provides guidance in reducing the costs and losses that are becoming more common as people move to areas with heavy fuels.

Footnote:

1. *Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, Table 2, Item #1*
2. *Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, Table 2, Item #10*
3. *Wildland Fire Use, Implementation Procedures Reference Guide, May 2005*
4. *Interagency Strategy for the Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, Table 2, Item #11*
5. *A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment, 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan, May 2002, Goal Two- Reducing Hazardous Fuels*