

# NEPA on Fire

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A monthly fact sheet about fuels treatments and the NEPA process.

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**A forum for fuels specialists; NEPA coordinators, writers, and editors; silviculturists; and others interested in accomplishing fuels hazard reduction projects.**



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## Team to Resolve Critical Policy Issues

The Washington Office Ecosystem Management Coordination (EMC) and Fire and Aviation Management (FAM) staffs are developing policies, regulations, and directives that have critical shared implications. Coordination between these staffs is essential to create compatible procedures and policies.

Discussions between EMC and FAM staffs have identified the need for a team to help with the development of strategies for resolution and implementation of planning and fire issues.

The team, chartered by EMC and FAM, will help resolve critical policy issues on fire management plans and plan implementation for National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) site-specific projects and Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation. The team will be responsible for:

- Developing strategies for resolution of critical policy issues;
- Examining the current operating environment for fire management planning;
- Looking at issues related to wildland fire use, threatened and endangered species, fire management

plans, National Ambient Air Quality Standards, and NEPA compliance; and

- Identifying other members or consultants to address special issues, such as NEPA and the Endangered Species Act.

Specifically, EMC and FAM hope that this team will:

1. Compare the draft inventory of fire management decisions with NEPA-process criteria.
2. Develop a strategic decision-making plan identifying where to document land and resource management plans, fire management plans, or incident management records and how to achieve compliance with the NEPA process.
3. Coordinate the updating of relevant fire and aviation management policy, directives, and technical guidance to reflect the decisions reached.



## Litigation

### Attorney General Challenges Fire Management Plan

The California Attorney General's Office has challenged the Sequoia National Forest Fire Management Plan. The State seeks injunctive relief requiring the forest to prepare an Environmental Impact Statement or an Environmental Assessment for the fire management plan (FMP).

The Attorney General's Office wants to stop the forest from implementing provisions of the FMP that might adversely affect the environment. They are requesting this action until the Forest Service subjects the FMP to all requirements of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and its implementing regulations.

The complaint alleges violations of NEPA and the Administrative Procedure Act (APA). Specifically, that the FMP contains strategic decisions on fuels management and fire suppression within detailed areas of the forest. The State also contends that the FMP includes what activities are approved for which conditions, where prescribed burns are allowed and under what conditions, and where and under what circumstances wildland fire is allowed to burn under natural conditions.

In addition, the complaint alleges that the decisions of the Sequoia National Forest Fire Management Plan do not reflect any other decision-making



documents approved during the NEPA process. Lastly, the State alleges that the Forest Service did not comply with NEPA and its implementing regulations when approving the FMP, within the meaning of the APA.

## Tips on Writing Fire Management Plans

Concern continues about the link between fire management plans (FMPs) and land and resource management plans (LRMPs).

To avoid confusion when writing FMPs, try not to use words that are traditionally associated with the NEPA process, such as *alternative*, *scoping*, *purpose and need*, *proposed action*, *public involvement*, *environmental consequences* and

other terms that have NEPA-specific meanings.

When referencing existing direction into the LRMP, note the direction in a footnote by narrative and page number. Explain where the direction came from and make sure that new LRMP decisions do not accidentally creep into the document.

Complete a plan amendment before including new LRMP guidelines in an existing FMP.



It is anticipated that the new Planning Rule will provide a method to include fuels and fire considerations into revised LRMPs.

Send YOUR questions or comments to





## On the Web



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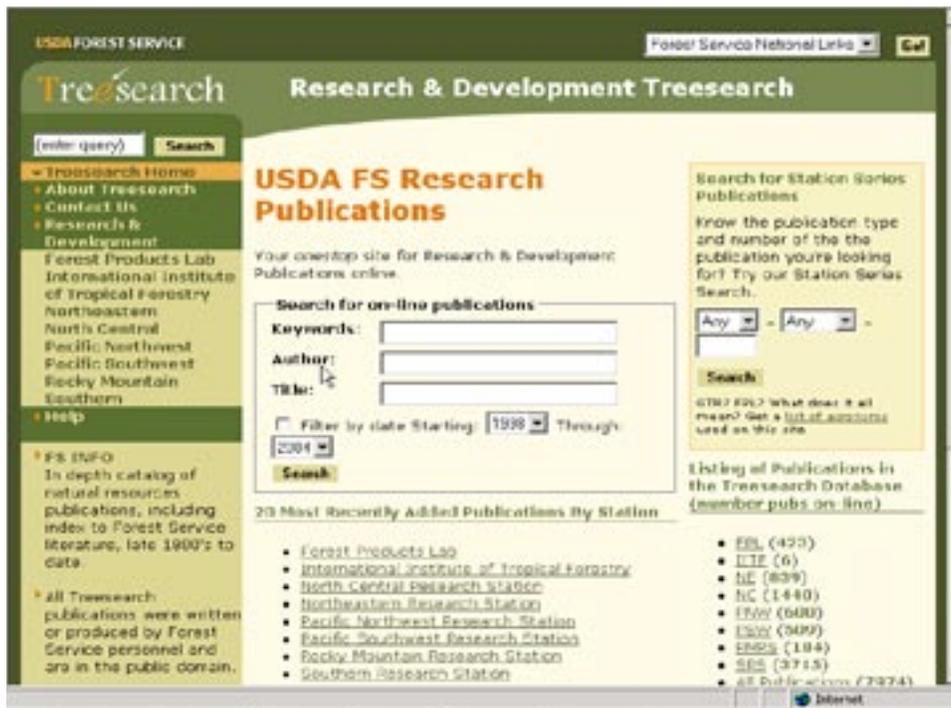
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larger file that is usually a scanned or graphically represented version of the original document. Either way, your computer will need Adobe Acrobat Reader installed to view and print the document. See [Adobe's Acrobat Reader Download Page](#) if you need this free plug-in.

Click on this link <http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/> and go to the Rocky Mountain Research Station to view the online publication: *RMRS-GTR-120: Science Basis for Changing Forest Structure to Modify Wildfire Behavior and Severity*.

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# Largest Fire in Colorado History has Profound Impact on Fire Management Issues

In 2002, the Front Range of the Rocky Mountains in Colorado was rich in dry vegetation due to fire exclusion and the drought conditions. The dry and heavy fuel loadings were continuous along the South Platte River corridor between Denver and Colorado Springs.

The topographic and fuel conditions—combined with a dry and windy weather system—produced ideal burning conditions. The Hayman fire took advantage of these conditions resulting in a single day wildfire run on more than 60,000 acres and ultimately impacting more than 138,000 acres.

The *Hayman Fire Case Study*, involving more than 60 scientists and professionals from throughout the United States, examined:

- How the fire behaved;
- Effects of fuel treatments on burn severity;
- Emissions produced;
- Ecological effects (for example, soil, vegetation, and animals);
- Home destruction;
- Postfire rehabilitation activities; and
- Social and economic issues.

The *Hayman Fire Case Study* revealed much about wildfires and their interactions with both the social and natural environments.

As the largest fire in Colorado history, the Hayman fire had a profound impact both locally and nationally. The findings of

this study will contribute to both private and public decisions on the management of natural resources and how individuals, communities, and organizations can prepare for wildfire events.

For more information visit [http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/hayman\\_fire/](http://www.fs.fed.us/rm/hayman_fire/).

This publication summarizes the findings in the 400-page companion document, *Hayman Fire Case Study*, Gen. Tech. Rep. RMRS-GTR-114. This summary document's purpose is to convey information quickly and succinctly to a wide array of audiences.

