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Abstract

Fire has been one of the primary natural forces that has shaped the overall composition, distribution, and arrangement of vegetation in the subsections described in this plan. During the last century fire has not been allowed to function in its natural role and has instead primarily been suppressed in these areas. The benefits of naturally occurring wildland fire are recognized and the Caribou-Targhee Wildland Fire Use Guidebook is intended to serve as guide to successfully navigate the authority and responsibility required to manage natural ignitions in the geographical areas described herein. These areas include the Jedediah Smith and Winegar Hole Wildernesses as well as non-wilderness lands. The guidebook is a compilation of established National, Regional and Forest direction regarding Wildland Fire Use. This is not a decision document, rather an implementation guide for direction established in the 1997 Targhee Revised Forest Plan. The guidebook also addresses requirements and procedure required by the Greater Yellowstone Coordinating Group (GYACC) and replaces the 1997 Jedediah Smith Wilderness Fire Management Plan. The Guidebook is intended as a "living document" and will be summarily updated as policy changes and/or additional subsections are evaluated. While only two subsections (FMAs) have been evaluated under the current plan, it is anticipated that the remaining subsections be evaluated, and the guidebook amended to include these areas.



*The earth, born in fire, baptized by lightning, since before life's beginning
has been and is, a fire planet.*

E.V. Komarek

Revisions

The Caribou-Targhee Wildland Fire Use Guidebook was designed and intended as a modular document to be updated as additional subsections are evaluated for fire use suitability. These revisions/additions are to be approved by the Forest Supervisor and documented on this page. Include a brief discussion describing the revision, author, and date approved. Revisions pertaining to policy will not require Forest Supervisor signature but will be recorded in the revision description. One copy of the guidebook will be issued to each District, one to Dispatch and one to the Forest Fire Management Officer. Notice of revision will be sent to the holders of these copies who are then responsible for updating District copies. An electronic version of the guidebook will be maintained on the Caribou-Targhee Forest Website and will be considered the master document. Efforts will be made to keep this copy current as policy changes/and or additional subsections are added.

Revision Description/Author	Forest Supervisor Signature	Date Approved

Revision Description/Author	Forest Supervisor Signature	Date Approved

Authority

5140.1 - Authority. Both the National Forest Management Act of October 22, 1976 (16 U.S.C. 1600 et seq.), and the Clean Air Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 7401 et seq.), are applicable to the use of fire on National Forest System lands. These acts are summarized in FSM 5101.1. In addition, the Wilderness Act of September 3, 1964 (16 U.S.C. 1131, 1132), directs that wilderness be protected and managed so as to preserve its natural condition and be affected primarily by the forces of nature.

The Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy adopted December 18, 1995, by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior directs agency heads and other officials to implement the principles, policies, and recommendations in the Final Report of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review (FSM 5101.4). Additional direction is in the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Management Policy Implementation Procedures Reference Guide (FSM 5140.32, 5108). See Series 5000 manual direction at: <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/directives/html/fsm5000.html>

5140.41 - Regional Forester: The Regional Forester has the authority and responsibility for:

1. Approving direction for fire use embodied in forest plans.
2. Managing the Regional fire use program and coordinating the Regional fire use program with the National program.
3. Ensuring that Forests conduct prescribed fires and wildland fire use projects in compliance with National and Regional fire management policies and standards.
4. Under severe burning conditions, deciding whether or not to approve new fire use or continuation of existing fire use (FSM 5140.31, para. 9).
5. Ensuring the development and application of Regional standards for consistent preparation of the Prescribed Fire Burn Plan (RxBP) and Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP).
6. Ensuring the development and use of smoke management criteria to guide decisions on fire use projects (FSM 5144).
7. Ensuring the timely preparation and transmittal of annual accomplishment reports to the national fire use database (FSM 5147).

5140.42 - Forest Supervisor: The Forest Supervisor has the authority and responsibility for:

1. Integrating the role and use of fire and establishing fire management direction to meet resource objectives in the applicable forest plans.
2. Approving the Prescribed Fire Burn Plan (RxBP) and Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP). This authority may be delegated to a District Ranger, but only if the District Ranger has the requisite fire management knowledge, experience, and staff available.
3. Reporting to the Regional Forester existing or potentially severe burning conditions on the unit. Where the Regional Forester decides that the Supervisor may continue to make decisions on fire use on the unit under severe burning conditions, the Supervisor, depending on the complexity of the situation, may delegate fire use approval authority to a District Ranger, but only if the District Ranger has the requisite fire management knowledge, experience, and staff available.
4. Providing specific direction on fire use through annual approval of the Fire Management Plan consistent with the approved forest plan.
5. Ensuring that the RxBP or WFIP, and the personnel implementing them, including contractors, meet Service-wide and Regional requirements (FSM 5142, 5143, 5145, and 5148).
6. Ensuring adequate tracking and monitoring of all prescribed or wildland fire use at the Forest level (FSM 5142.21, para. 12 and FSM 5147).

Fire Use Objectives and Acceptable Outcomes

Historically, fire has played a significant role in the Greater Yellowstone Area (GYA). Some plants have evolved with fire and have adapted to it in various ways. Fires occurred naturally at certain average time intervals, which varied by vegetation and climatic conditions. Fires were also set by humans on a fairly regular basis, particularly in the sagebrush/grass and aspen communities. These fires created mosaic patterns of different seral stages of vegetation across the landscape.

In the early 1900s public concern for protecting the forests from fire ushered in a period of aggressive fire suppression, which has continued to the present. With these suppression strategies and the lack of a prescribed fire program, the fire intervals that occurred historically have been altered. Due to the absence of fire, much of the forest vegetation has reached the mature age class and herbaceous/shrub types are in the later stages of succession. The mosaic patterns in the landscape are not as prevalent as before. These conditions increase the potential for fires of higher intensity, which may be detrimental to species that evolved with frequent, low intensity burns.

Fire Management objectives provide a general framework within which specific land management objectives are achieved for a management area. General Forest Service fire use objectives outlined in FSM 5140.2 and FSM 2324.21 include:

- To use fire from either management ignitions or natural ignitions in a safe, carefully planned, and cost-effective manner to benefit, protect, maintain, and enhance National Forest System resources.
- Reduce future fire suppression costs
- Restore natural ecological processes and achieve management objectives adopted in approved forest land and resource management plans (forest plans).
- Permit lightning fires to play, as nearly as possible, their natural ecological role within wilderness.
- Reduce, to an acceptable level, the risks and consequences of wildfire within wilderness or escaping from wilderness.

The Targhee National Forest Plan (revised 1997) acknowledges the natural role of fire in its fire dependant ecosystem. Specifically, forest wide goals pertaining to fire include:

- Identify the historic role of fire and restore fire as an ecological process, where appropriate to achieve multiple-use and ecosystem management objectives.
- Prescribed fire and managed natural fire is used to achieve desirable soil and habitat characteristics, improve forest health, and create or maintain diversity in vegetative structure, composition, and patterns as described in a PFC analysis.
- Suppress fire in a safe, cost-effective manner where necessary to protect human life and safety, developments, structures, and sensitive resource values.
- Fuel accumulations are reduced and managed within their historic range.

Specific goals and objectives pertaining to the included subsections include:

- Use management-ignited and natural fire to meet resource objectives. Comply with Jedediah Smith Wilderness Fire Management Plan (Madison Pitchstone and Teton Range subsections)
- By 2007 complete a fire management plan for the Teton Range subsection which will include opportunities for improving bighorn sheep habitat (Teton Range subsection).

The Caribou-Targhee Fire Use Guidebook should also strive to achieve the following secondary objectives in order to permit lightning-caused fires to play their natural ecological role and reduce the risks and consequences of wildfire within the subsection.

- Safety- No injuries to personnel and/or members of the public. Strive to minimize damage to administrative sites and private property, while providing for firefighter and public safety first.
- Air Quality- Assess Air Quality impacts in communities surrounding the included FMAs. Smoke from wildland fire use is not human-caused, so it is permissible to impact the air quality in wilderness.
- Education- Provide and increase opportunities for the public and permittee (outfitters) to observe and interpret fire's natural role in the ecosystem. A proactive fire ecology program should be implemented and targeted at schools, public-service groups, and the general public, in order to achieve the predominate objectives of fire management
- Economic- Minimize the cost of fire management programs.

Acceptable outcomes from achieving these objectives are:

- Maintenance and/or enhancement of vegetative mosaics and biological diversity that result from fire.
- Continuing plant and animal relationships that evolve with fire.
- Conservation of genetic traits that certain vegetative species developed in response to fire.
- Living and dead fuels approach a "natural" state of continuity, arrangement, depth, and loading.
- Public awareness that a fire is a natural and essential component of many ecosystems.
- Forest visitors safely witness the natural role of fire.
- Fire effects on historical values are mitigated.
- Non-Forest lands are protected from fire.
- Where appropriate, minimum-impact suppression tactics are successfully utilized on holding actions involving Wildland Fire Use and suppression actions on wildfires.
- Appropriate management response and resources expended are commensurate with the location, values threatened and unfavorable impacts that may result from wildland fire