

# Ecosystem Management Issues<sup>1</sup>

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Although recognized as an important tool for ecosystem maintenance, fuels management, and a variety of other purposes, the prescribed fire program in the Pacific Southwest Region of the USDA Forest Service has been constrained by several factors. These range from funding availability, to debates on the effect of fire on the habitat of sensitive species, to competition for resources with fire suppression activities, to the lack of awareness at various levels in the organization of the need for prescribed fire as a land management tool. The Advisory Group for Fire in Ecosystem Management (AGFEM) was established in 1992 to facilitate the use of prescribed fire in the Region. Members of the group were selected from a variety of backgrounds, such as wildlife, fuels management, timber, fire management, air quality, soils, and hydrology. The group has also worked closely with the California Fuels Committee. The

interdisciplinary approach allows a fuller discussion of the various concerns about the use of fire. These concerns have been expanded into a list of action items that have also been developed into an annual program of work. The work items are expected to break down barriers to implementing a prescribed fire program. For 1994, these included the development of a fire awareness presentation to the Regional Management Team. If supported by the Team, similar presentations will be made at line officers' and specialists' workshops. Each member on the AGFEM is a key contact for such presentations within his or her own professional community. Other topics recommended by the AGFEM include Minimum Impact Suppression Guidelines for wilderness, a guide for developing wilderness fire programs, review of proposed standards for prescribed fire qualifications and training, and development of an annotated fire effects bibliography.

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<sup>1</sup>An abbreviated version of this paper was presented at the Biswell Symposium: Fire Issues and Solutions in Urban Interface and Wildland Ecosystems, February 15-17, 1994, Walnut Creek, California.

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