



FSM 5100 – WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

CHAPTER 5140 – HAZARDOUS FUELS MANAGEMENT AND PRESCRIBED FIRE

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56 This chapter provides direction on mitigating hazardous fuels and using fire to achieve desired
57 landscape conditions and attain Land and Resource Management Plan objectives.

58 **5140.1 – Authority**

59 See FSM 5101

60 **5140.2 – Objectives**

- 61 1. Understand the role of fire on the landscape in order to integrate fire, as a critical natural
62 process, into land and resource management plans, and develop achievable and
63 sustainable Land and Resource Management Plan (LRMP) objectives that provide for
64 landscapes which are resilient to fire related disturbances and climate change.
- 65 2. In cooperation with partners, strategically plan and implement on a landscape scale, risk-
66 informed, and cost-effective hazardous fuel modification and vegetation management
67 treatments (wildland fire (wildfire and prescribed), mechanical manipulation, biological,
68 and chemical) to attain management objectives identified in Land and Resource
69 Management Plans, to protect, sustain, and enhance resources and, where appropriate,
70 emulate the ecological role of natural fire.

71 **5140.3 - Policy**

72 Plan and implement a hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program applying:

- 73 1. Principles and policy elements described in FSM 5103 and Wildland Fire Doctrine (FSM
74 5131).
- 75 2. Principles from the Cohesive Strategy (A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management
76 Strategy Phase II National Report, May 2012).

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- 77 3. Guidelines from The Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation
78 Procedures Reference Guide (see <http://www.nwcg.gov/pms/RxFire/rxfireguide.pdf>).
- 79 4. Consideration of greenhouse gas emissions and effects on carbon sequestration.

80 **5140.31 – Hazardous Fuels and Prescribed Fire in Wilderness**

- 81 1. Unplanned ignitions from lightning may be used to achieve wilderness objectives.
- 82 2. Forest Service managers may ignite a prescribed fire in wilderness to reduce unnatural
83 buildups of hazardous fuels only if necessary to meet at least one of the wilderness fire
84 management objectives set forth in FSM 2324.21 and if all of the following conditions
85 are met:
- 86 a. The use of prescribed fire or other fuel treatment measures outside of wilderness
87 is not sufficient to achieve fire management objectives within wilderness.
- 88 b. An interdisciplinary team of resource specialists has evaluated and recommended
89 the proposed use of prescribed fire.
- 90 c. The interested public has been involved appropriately in the decision.
- 91 d. The use of lightning-caused fires will pose serious threats to life and/or property
92 within wilderness or to life, property, or natural resources outside of wilderness.
- 93 e. Do not use prescribed fire in wilderness to benefit wildlife, maintain vegetative
94 types, improve forage production, or enhance other resource values. Although
95 these additional effects may result from a decision to use prescribed fire, use fire
96 in wilderness only to meet wilderness fire management objectives.

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- 97 f. Do not use management ignited fire to achieve wilderness fire management
98 objectives where lightning-caused fires can achieve them. (Reference FSM 2324).

99 **5140.4 – Responsibility**

100 **5140.41 – Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry**

101 The Deputy Chief will communicate with the Regional Foresters to establish priorities and create
102 a shared vision for the hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program.

103 **5140.42 – Washington Office, Director, Fire and Aviation Management**

104 It is the responsibility of the Director, Fire and Aviation Management to coordinate
105 implementation of the hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program by:

- 106 1. Collaborating with Federal and non-federal partners to:
- 107 a. Develop qualification standards for personnel implementing hazardous fuels
108 management and prescribed fire programs;
- 109 b. Develop national standards and procedures for planning, establishing program
110 priorities, and implementing hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire
111 programs.
- 112 c. Recommend to the Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, national strategies,
113 program priorities, and implementing measures to attain the National Cohesive
114 Strategy vision “To safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire
115 where allowable; manage our natural resources: and as a Nation, live with
116 wildland fire.”

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117 d. Develop, provide oversight, and maintain systems to monitor the impacts and
118 effectiveness of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire programs to
119 achieve Agency goals and objectives.

120 **5140.43 - Regional Foresters**

121 It is the responsibility of the Regional Forester to:

- 122 1. Establish direction that supports the risk-based, strategically planned, prioritized, and
123 cost-effective application of hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire practices to
124 achieve Land and Resource Management Plans objectives.
- 125 2. Ensure that Forests and Grasslands coordinate planning and implementation of hazardous
126 fuels management and prescribed fire practices with state and local cooperators and
127 partners.
- 128 3. Manage and provide oversight of the regional hazardous fuels management and
129 prescribed fire program and ensure that Forests and Grasslands implement hazardous
130 fuels management and prescribed fire practices in compliance with National and
131 Regional policies and standards.

132 **5140.44 – Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management**

133 It is the responsibility of the Regional Director, Fire and Aviation Management to:

- 134 1. Coordinate and provide oversight of the regional hazardous fuels management and
135 prescribed fire program to monitor Forests and Grasslands compliance with National and
136 Regional fire management policies and standards.

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- 137 2. Coordinate the Regional hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire program with
138 the National program, ensuring accurate and timely reporting of all hazardous fuels
139 management and prescribed fire activity.

140 **5140.45 - Forest Supervisors**

141 It is the responsibility of the Forest Supervisor to:

- 142 1. Establish fire management direction in the Land and Resource Management Plan to
143 integrate the role and use of wildland fire and hazardous fuels management in defining
144 and achieving resource objectives.
- 145 2. Ensure that the Fire Management Reference Guide is current and accurately reflects
146 hazardous fuels management and wildland fire implementation procedures and standards
147 (FSM 5141).
- 148 3. Ensure a fuel treatment effectiveness assessment is conducted on all wildfires which start
149 in or burn areas where hazardous fuels were treated (including treatments by wildfire)
150 (see FSM 5144).

151 **5140.46 - District Rangers**

152 It is the responsibility of the District Ranger to:

- 153 1. Integrate the role and use of wildland fire and establish fire management direction to
154 meet resource objectives in the Land and Resource Management plan and other
155 applicable forest-level plans.
- 156 2. Assess conditions, plan, and implement a fuels program meeting National standards and
157 Land and Resource Management Plan objectives.

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- 158 3. Collaborate with state and local partners to coordinate hazardous fuels management and
159 prescribed fire projects and activities.

160 **5140.5 - Definitions**

161 Administrative Burning – The burning of debris (forest vegetation) at administrative sites, sites
162 under special use permit, or sites covered under formal agreements. The debris being burned is
163 generated by routine administrative activities, such as fall leaf and needle raking, right-of-way
164 clearing, and trimming or removal of trees and shrubs adjacent to structures for defensible space.

165 Hazard Fuel - A fuel complex defined by kind, arrangement, volume, condition, and location that
166 presents a threat of ignition and resistance to control.

167 For additional definitions of terms used in this chapter, refer to FSM 5105.

168 **5140.6 - References**

169 Operational procedures contained in publications listed in FSM 5107 and the documents listed
170 below are used by Forest Service personnel in the conduct of prescribed fire activities. The
171 nature of the wildland fire environment is often dynamic, chaotic, and unpredictable and in such
172 an environment, reasonable discretion in decision-making may be required. Thus, the body of
173 procedures, best practices, concepts, and principles described in the listed publications should be
174 considered the best guidance available for the majority of circumstances. Forest Service
175 employees must use their best judgment in applying the guidance contained in these references to
176 real-life situations.

- 177 1. Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide.
178 2. Prescribed Fire Complexity Rating System Guide (NWCG, NFES 2474, PMS 424).

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- 179 3. Prescribed Fire Smoke Management Guide (NWCG, NFES 1279, PMS 420-1).
- 180 4. NWCG PMS 310-1 Wildland Fire and Prescribed Fire Qualifications System Guide
- 181 (NWCG PMS 310-1 2000).
- 182 5. National Interagency Mobilization Guide (NFES 2092).
- 183 6. Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (February 13,
- 184 2009).
- 185 7. Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review, Final Report, December
- 186 18, 1995.
- 187 8. Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations (NWCG, NFES 2724).
- 188 9. Basic Smoke Management Practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and
- 189 Forest Service Technical Note
- 190 (2011). http://www.airquality.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb10463
- 191 [11.pdf](#)

5141 – HAZARDOUS FUELS MANAGEMENT AND PRESCRIBED FIRE PLANNING

- 192 1. Overall direction for hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire is provided by the
- 193 Land/Resource Management Plan. The LRMP serves as the document to initiate, analyze,
- 194 and provide the basis for implementing hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire
- 195 projects to meet resource management objectives.
- 196
- 197
- 198 2. The broad direction for implementing the hazardous fuels management and prescribed
- 199 fire program is documented in the Fire Management Reference System, the agency

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200 template for the national interagency Fire Management Plan, electronic filing structure
201 located at <http://fsweb.wo.fs.fed.us/fire/fmp>.

202 3. Resource objectives for specific hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects
203 are derived from the NEPA analysis. The entire project area must be analyzed under
204 NEPA. Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), Environmental Assessments (EA), and
205 Categorical Exclusion (CE) will be used to identify objectives and analyze the effects of
206 hazardous fuels management and prescribed fire projects.

207 **5142 - PRESCRIBED FIRE**

208 **5142.03 – Policy**

- 209 1. When appropriate, use prescribed fire in a safe, carefully planned, and cost-effective
210 manner to achieve desired conditions and attain management objectives identified in
211 Land and Resource Management Plans (FSM 1920).
- 212 2. Only use qualified personnel in implementing prescribed fire activities.
- 213 3. Converting a prescribed fire to a wildfire
- 214 a. A wide variety of conditions may result in the conversion of a prescribed fire to a
215 wildfire and this decision is made by the Burn Boss, Rx Fire Manager, or Line
216 Officer (or those identified with this responsibility in the Prescribed Fire Burn
217 plan).
- 218 b. A prescribed fire must, however, be declared a wildfire when the fire has spread
219 outside the project boundary, or is likely to do so; when contingency and

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- 220 mitigation actions have failed, or are likely to fail; and when the fire cannot be
221 contained by the end of the next burning period.
- 222 c. Review all prescribed fires declared a wildfire. Use FSM 5135.3 and guidelines
223 from the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures
224 Reference Guide to dictate the nature and intensity of the review.
- 225 d. Wildfire response with Agency assets may be implemented without
226 reimbursement if a Forest Service-initiated prescribed fire escapes onto non-
227 National Forest or Grassland System lands (FSM 5133.1).
- 228 4. Weather conditions must be monitored during all phases (including mop up) of
229 prescribed fire implementation.
- 230 a. Long-term weather conditions such as drought must be considered in all phases of
231 prescribed fire planning and implementation.
- 232 b. A project-specific spot weather forecast must be obtained prior to ignition; for
233 each day that ignition continues; on any day the fire is actively spreading; or when
234 conditions adversely affecting the prescribed fire are predicted in the general
235 forecast.
- 236 c. The authorizing line officer may make an exemption from the spot weather
237 forecast requirement using criteria listed below. When daily spot weather
238 forecasts are exempted, the general weather forecast must be reviewed daily until
239 the prescribed burn is declared “out” to ensure prescribed fire and smoke
240 management requirements are met. The exemption needs approval by the line

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241 officer only once, and the burn boss may invoke the exemption when conditions
242 are observed which meet the exemption criteria.

243 i. The general fire weather forecast for the Fire Weather Zone in which the
244 prescribed burn is occurring is usually the same as any spot forecast within
245 the Fire Weather Zone. This situation may occur in Fire Weather Zones
246 which have little topographic relief.

247 ii. There is a low threat of escape due to weather/fuel moisture conditions.
248 This exemption is intended for situations such as burning piles with snow
249 on the ground where fire cannot spread outside the burning pile on the day
250 of the exemption.

251 **5142.4 – Responsibility**

252 **5142.41 – Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry**

253 The Deputy Chief will ensure coordination with the State Foresters, relevant state and federal
254 agencies, cooperators and partners to communicate the goals and objectives of the prescribed fire
255 program.

256 **5142.41 - Washington Office, Director, Fire and Aviation Management**

257 It is the responsibility of the Director, Fire and Aviation Management to:

258 1. Advise Regions of national conditions (e.g. asset constraints, broad scale weather
259 patterns, wildland fire activity, etc.) that may compromise the ability to support
260 prescribed fire activities.

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- 261 2. Develop and support training to qualify personnel to implement prescribed fire programs.
- 262 3. Ensure collection and analysis of Regional, Unit, and project Prescribed Fire Reviews to
- 263 improve policy and implementation practices.

264 **5142.42 - Regional Foresters**

265 It is the responsibility of the Regional Forester to:

- 266 1. Establish guidance for approval of prescribed fire initiation based on regional conditions
- 267 and resource capability; and approve or disapprove new prescribed fires or continue
- 268 existing prescribed fire at National Preparedness Levels IV and V.
- 269 2. Ensure forest supervisors are qualified to approve Prescribed Fire Burn Plans on forests
- 270 and grasslands. See FSM 5142.51 for Forest Supervisor qualifications.
- 271 3. Conduct reviews (and report review results to the Chief within 90 days) of all prescribed
- 272 fires resulting in serious or multiple personal injuries; that are converted to wildfire
- 273 status; that burn significant private or other agency lands; or result in the issuance of an
- 274 air quality regulatory Notice-of-Violation from the State, air pollution control district,
- 275 and/or county.

276 **5142.43 – Regional Directors, Fire and Aviation Management**

277 It is the responsibility of the Regional Director, Fire and Aviation Management to:

- 278 1. Provide oversight to ensure that Forests and Grasslands apply prescribed fire safely and
- 279 cost effectively to achieve Land and Resource Management Plans objectives.
- 280 2. Provide recommendations to the Regional Forester to establish guidance for approval of
- 281 prescribed fire initiation based on regional conditions and resource capability; and

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282 whether to approve or disapprove new prescribed fires or continue existing prescribed
283 fire at National Preparedness Levels IV and V.

284 3. Monitor conditions and advise Forests and Grasslands of conditions which may
285 compromise successful implementation of prescribed fire activities.

286 4. Provide recommendations to the Regional Forester on the qualifications of forest
287 supervisors to make line officer prescribed fire decisions on forests and grasslands. See
288 FSM 5142.51 for Forest Supervisor qualifications.

289 5. Ensure forests complete a fuel treatment effectiveness assessment (see 5144) (and report
290 assessment results to Washington Office FAM within 90 days of control of the fire) on all
291 wildfires which start in or burn into a fuel treatment (including areas previously affected
292 by wildfire) that has been completed within the last 10 years (within the last 3 years in
293 the Southern Region or in portions of other regions designated by the regional forester).

294 6. Monitor prescribed fire activity and ensure accurate and timely reporting (tabular and
295 spatial) of all Forest or Grassland prescribed fire activity.

296 7. Report all wildfires resulting from prescribed fire actions and any exceedance of the
297 National Ambient Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to the regional forester as soon as
298 practicable following the wildfire declaration or notification of the NAAQS exceedance.

299 **5142.44 – Forest Supervisors**

300 It is the responsibility of the Forest Supervisor to:

301 1. Approve or reject Prescribed Fire Burn Plans, ensuring that Prescribed Fire Burn Plans
302 (RxBPs) are designed to achieve Land and Resource Management Plan objectives, and

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- 303 meet service wide and regional requirements found in FSM 5142, 5143, and 5145, and
304 the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide. This
305 authority may be delegated to a District Ranger on the basis of qualification, experience,
306 and demonstrated ability (see FSM 5142.51).
- 307 2. Approve or disapprove ignition of new prescribed fire. This authority may be delegated
308 to a District Ranger on the basis of qualification, experience, and demonstrated ability
309 (see FSM 5140.7).
- 310 3. Request Regional Forester approval for new prescribed fire as required by Regional
311 direction, or National direction for Preparedness Levels IV and V.
- 312 4. Ensure and document the relevant training and experience that demonstrate that
313 personnel implementing Prescribed Fire Burn plans meet service wide and regional
314 requirements found in FSM 5142, 5143, and 5145, and the Interagency Prescribed Fire
315 Planning and Implementation Procedures Guide.
- 316 5. Ensure accurate and timely reporting of all Forest or Grassland prescribed fire activity
317 and report all wildfires resulting from prescribed fire actions to the Regional Forester
318 within 12 hours of the wildfire declaration. Report exceedances of the National Ambient
319 Air Quality Standards (NAAQS) to the Regional Forester as soon as practicable.
- 320 6. Conduct reviews of all prescribed fires that are converted to wildfire status. Report the
321 results of the review to the Regional Forester within 60 days after the prescribed fire was
322 declared a wildfire.
- 323 7. Ensure that prescribed fire personnel are trained in the After Action Review (AAR)
324 process and that they routinely complete AARs after prescribed fire operations.

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325 8. Conduct an administrative review or facilitated learning analysis on causes of any
326 exceedances of the NAAQS associated with prescribed fire within three months of
327 notification.

328 **5142.45 - District Rangers**

329 It is the responsibility of the District Ranger to:

- 330 1. If delegated by Forest Supervisor, approve or disapprove ignition of new prescribed fire,
331 or request Regional Forester approval for new prescribed fire as required by Regional
332 direction, or National direction for Preparedness Levels IV and V.
- 333 2. If delegated by Forest Supervisor, approve or reject Prescribed Fire Burn Plans, ensuring
334 that Prescribed Fire Burn Plans (RxBPs) are designed to achieve Land and Resource
335 Management Plan objectives, and meet service wide and regional requirements found in
336 FSM 5142, 5143, and 5145, and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and
337 Implementation Procedures Guide.
- 338 3. Ensure the personnel implementing Prescribed Fire Burn plans meet service-wide and
339 regional qualifications (FSM 5142.5) and the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and
340 Implementation Procedures Guide). Ensure documentation of the relevant training and
341 experience.
- 342 4. Ensure adequate oversight and status reporting of all prescribed fires at the district level;
343 reporting all wildfires resulting from prescribed fire actions to the Forest Supervisor
344 within 4 hours.

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- 345 5. Report potential and actual exceedances of the National Ambient Air Quality Standards
346 (NAAQS) as soon as practicable.

347 **5142.5 Qualifications for Implementing Prescribed Fire**

348 **5142.51 - Agency Personnel**

349 See 5109.17 Wildland Fire Qualifications Handbook

350 **5142.52 – Contractors**

351 Include qualifications requirements for any specific skill position that the contractor must
352 provide in any contracts for prescribed fire operations. Qualification clauses in contracts must
353 require contractors to meet requirements listed in NWCG PMS 310-1 Wildland Fire and
354 Prescribed Fire Qualifications System Guide (2000) or FSH 5109.17 for positions (for example:
355 RXB3) not included in NWCG PMS 310-1.

356 **5142.6 - Prescribed Fire Burn Plans**

- 357 1. Prepare a site-specific Prescribed Fire Burn Plan as described in the Interagency
358 Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide for each
359 prescribed fire in advance of the ignition. If more than 1 year has elapsed since approval,
360 a burn plan will be reviewed, updated, as necessary, and approved before
361 implementation.
- 362 2. The Agency Administrator Ignition Authorization is required to be completed prior to
363 ignition.
- 364 3. The Prescribed Fire Plan will specify who has the authority to declare a wildfire.

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365 **5142.7 – Prescribed Fire Operations and Organization**

366 See the Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures Reference Guide
367 as referenced in section 5140.3.

368 **5142.8 – Smoke Management**

- 369 1. Coordinate prescribed fire program activities with Regional air quality specialists and
370 Federal, State, Tribal, air pollution control district or county regulatory authorities to
371 ensure compliance with their regulations which are supported by the Clean Air Act.
- 372 2. When multiple wildland fire events are occurring within an airshed, or any airshed is
373 impacted by ongoing wildland fire events, fire managers will consider the cumulative
374 impact to air quality which their management actions might cause and implement
375 prescribed fire only if compliance with air quality regulations can be maintained.
- 376 3. All prescribed fires should be conducted using Basic Smoke Management Practices (see
377 Basic Smoke Management Practices. USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service and
378 Forest Service Technical Note
379 (2011). http://www.airquality.nrcs.usda.gov/Internet/FSE_DOCUMENTS/stelprdb10463
380 [11.pdf](#)

381 **5143 – ADMINISTRATIVE BURNING**

382 Administrative burning is exempted from the requirements of FSM 5140. This type of burning
383 will adhere to local government debris burning requirements, air quality regulations or codes,
384 and follow additional requirements as determined by the forest supervisor or other delegated line
385 officer.

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386 **5144 - ASSESSING AND REPORTING HAZARDOUS FUELS TREATMENT**

387 **EFFECTIVENESS**

388 Complete an assessment a on all wildfires which start in or burn into a fuel treatment or areas
389 previously burned by wildfire to assess the effectiveness of hazardous fuels treatments in
390 mitigating wildfire impacts. Assess areas where hazardous fuels have been treated or visited by
391 wildfire within the last ten years (within the last three years in the Southern Region or similar
392 short interval fire regimes). Within 90 days of control of the fire, document and report the
393 assessment using the standard fuel treatment effectiveness assessment form, which can be
394 completed and made available for use by the National Office at the following
395 website: www.nwportal.fs.usda.gov.

396