

Department of the Interior Departmental Manual

Effective Date: 01/18/2017

Series: Public Lands

Part 620: Wildland Fire Management

Chapter 5: Wildland Fire Response Program in Alaska

Originating Office: Office of Wildland Fire

620 DM 5

5.1 Purpose. This chapter provides policy and guidance for the Department of the Interior (DOI) Wildland Fire Response Program in Alaska.

5.2 Scope. The policy in this chapter applies to all DOI bureau/office activities involving wildland fire response in Alaska.

5.3 Program Requirements. Nothing in this chapter relieves heads of bureaus/offices of management responsibility and accountability for activities occurring on their respective lands.

A. The Bureau of Land Management (BLM) maintains and operates the DOI wildland fire suppression organization in Alaska with the primary intention of providing cost-effective suppression services and minimizing unnecessary duplication of suppression systems for DOI bureaus/offices. The BLM provides statewide mobility of wildland fire resources.

B. The BLM Alaska Fire Service (BLM-AFS) is authorized to provide safe, cost-effective wildland fire response consistent with approved land, natural and cultural resource management plans on DOI administered land and on lands that require protection under the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (ANCSA), as amended (43 U.S.C.1620(e)), hereinafter referred to as Native lands.

C. The BLM-AFS executes these services within the framework of approved fire management plans or within the mutually agreed upon standards established by the respective land managers or owners.

D. Wildland fire response services and other fire management activities provided on Native lands under the authority of ANCSA will consider Native lands managers on an equal basis with Federal land managers.

E. Each bureau/office will conduct non-response wildland fire management activities such as planning, education and prevention, fuels management, establishing wildfire response strategies, and setting priorities for the wildfire response organization on respective bureau lands.

5.4 Program Coordination. The Alaska Wildland Fire Coordinating Group (AWFCG), established and maintained through an interagency Memorandum of Understanding, includes representatives from BLM, National Park Service, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs, as well as other cooperators, as appropriate. The AWFCG is charged with coordinating interagency wildland fire management activities in Alaska. Each bureau representative in the AWFCG is responsible for making wildland fire management decisions and setting priorities in accordance with their respective bureau policies.

5.5 Cooperative Agreements. Specific organizational relationships between BLM, other bureaus/offices, and Native lands managers or owners will be identified in annual interagency operating and financial plans.

A. When economically and operationally beneficial for protection of DOI and Native lands, cooperative agreements may be entered into between BLM and the State of Alaska or other wildland fire response organizations to provide wildfire response services. These agreements shall be coordinated with the appropriate bureaus/offices and Native lands managers or owners. Any party whose lands are covered by a cooperative suppression agreement must remain involved in the compliance and performance of that agreement.

B. The basic responsibility for providing wildland fire response service to DOI and Native lands may not be transferred from BLM. Where BLM cooperative agreements are in effect, the responsibility for compliance with and performance of the agreement remains with BLM.

C. In southeast Alaska (south and east of Yakutat) where the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service is the primary Federal land management agency, each bureau/office is authorized to enter into individual cooperative agreements, as necessary, with the USDA Forest Service to respond to wildland fires on lands under their respective jurisdictions.

5.6 Handbooks. Technical or detailed instructions, or information on specific activities that supplement general policies and procedures in this chapter are set forth in one or more Departmental Handbooks, pursuant to 620 DM 1.1 A (3). The Handbooks are available at <http://elips.doi.gov>.