




United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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OWF POLICY MEMORANDUM 2016-07

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, National Park Service
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
Director, U.S. Geological Survey

From: Jim Douglas, Director – Office of Wildland Fire 

Subject: Performance Metrics to Validate Fuels Management Activities to Protect, Restore, and Maintain Sagebrush-Steppe Ecosystems

Purpose: The purpose of this Policy Memorandum is to provide a set of common interagency metrics for fuels management activities associated with protecting, restoring, and/or maintaining Great Basin sagebrush-steppe habitat

Background: The Final Report to the Secretary of the Interior (May 2015) for Secretarial Order 3336, *An Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy* outlines a set of longer-term actions and activities with assigned responsibilities and target completion timeframes. This OWF Policy Memorandum addresses *Action Item #2 for Section 7(b)iii. – Fuels*, directing the Department of the Interior to improve targeting of fuels reduction opportunities and implementation that will ultimately lead to increased health of our Nation's sagebrush-steppe ecosystem. The Final Report directs the Department of the Interior to:

“Develop common interagency metrics to validate fuels management activities in sagebrush-steppe.”

Further, the Final Report states that the metrics should be (1) consistent with those developed for monitoring and evaluation of greater sage-grouse land use plans and implementation of adaptive management strategy; (2) science-based; and (3) incorporated into fuels management effectiveness monitoring to understand how fuel treatments are influencing ecosystem structure, function, and resilience.

Scope: This Policy Memorandum applies to Department of the Interior bureau wildland fire management activities involving sagebrush-steppe ecosystems.

Time Frame: This Policy Memorandum is effective immediately and remains in effect until rescinded or modified, or superseded by updates to the Departmental Manual and/or supplemental direction for Secretarial Order 3336.

Policy: All areas managed and protected by the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Park Service, or U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service within the Great Basin sagebrush-steppe habitat must utilize the following metrics in Table 1 in order to provide consistent reporting of program outputs and outcomes that validate fuels management project and treatment activities (see attachment for greater detail):

Table 1. Common metrics to validate fuels management activities in sagebrush-steppe ecosystems.

| Number | Accomplishment Type | Measure Name |
|-----------|---------------------|--|
| Metric #1 | Output | Miles of fuel breaks created or maintained to reduce wildfire risk to sagebrush-steppe ecosystems by federal agencies and collaborators. |
| Metric #2 | Outcome | Percent change from the 10-year average of the number of acres burned by unwanted wildfire in sagebrush-steppe ecosystems on DOI lands. |
| Metric #3 | Outcome | Percent of fuel treatments intersected by wildfire that were effective in protecting sagebrush-steppe ecosystems from unwanted impacts. |
| Metric #4 | Output | Acres treated on DOI lands for restoration or maintenance purposes that met management objectives in sagebrush-steppe ecosystems. |
| Metric #5 | Output | Number of fuel treatments accomplished through partnerships that met management objectives. |

The Office of Wildland Fire will utilize the National Fire Plan Operating and Reporting System (NFPORS), the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM) program, the Financial Business Management System (FBMS), along with current bureau systems of record for wildland fire reporting to provide oversight and monitoring. The Fire Directors from each bureau are responsible for ensuring that source data for these metrics, as described in the attached metrics for fuels management activities in sagebrush-steppe reside in systems and records in accordance with existing reporting requirements.

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cc: Interior Fire Executives
Interior Fire Directors

**Department of the Interior
Common Interagency Metrics for
Fuels Management Activities in Sagebrush-Steppe**

The purpose of the common interagency metrics for fuels management activities involving sagebrush-steppe ecosystems is to validate the achievement of specified outcomes and to record specific outputs that are important in terms of tracking targeted accomplishments. Bureaus, regional/state offices, and field units may utilize additional metrics specific to land use and resource management planning documents or other criteria.

A primary longer-term action identified in *An Integrated Wildland Fire Management Strategy* (March 2015) is to improve targeting of fuels reduction opportunities and implementation that will ultimately lead to increased health of our Nation's sagebrush-steppe ecosystem. This action supports the need for increased capacity, staffing, and funding to continue to implement risk-based projects at the local and landscape-scale.

| Number and Accomplishment Type | Measure Name | Purpose and Definition | Data Source | Unit of Measure |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|---|-------------------------------|
| Metric #1 - OUTPUT | Miles of fuel breaks created or maintained to reduce wildfire risk in priority sagebrush-steppe ecosystems by federal agencies and collaborators. | Miles of "strategically placed" fuel breaks constructed or maintained in proximity to priority (as identified in Land Use Plans or equivalent) sagebrush steppe ecosystems by federal agencies and collaborators intended to minimize wildfire size and reduce wildfire risk. | NFPORS; each accomplished treatment will have a polygon uploaded. | Miles; derived from polygons. |
| Metric #2 – OUTCOME | Percent change from the 10-year average of the number of acres burned by unwanted wildfire in sagebrush-steppe ecosystems on Department of the Interior (DOI) lands. | Measure the collective efforts of fuels activities and incident response in minimizing acres burned in sagebrush-steppe ecosystems. | Fire Reports and supporting bureau records. | Percent change. |

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|------------------------|--|---|--|-----------------------|
| Metric #3 - OUTCOME | Percent of fuel treatments intersected by wildfires that were effective in protecting sagebrush-steppe ecosystems from unwanted impacts. | Determine whether fuel treatment design and implementation has been effective in protecting sagebrush-steppe ecosystems. This determination is accomplished by evaluating a variety of factors, including if an incident requires burned area rehabilitation funding. The purpose of the metric is to demonstrate the overall success of fuel treatments (e.g. fuel breaks) in achieving the intended goal of altering wildfire spread and intensity. | NFPORS fuels management records and the Fuels Treatment Effectiveness Monitoring (FTEM) program. | Percent. |
| Metric #4 - OUTPUT | Acres treated on DOI lands for restoration or maintenance purposes that met management objectives in sagebrush-steppe ecosystems. | Intended to record the volume of work accomplished (e.g., resulted in reduced cover of cheatgrass and/or reduced canopy cover) both annually and cumulatively for the entire sagebrush steppe ecosystem and to priority areas identified by bureaus to fulfill SO 3336. | NFPORS fuels management records. | Acres. |
| Metric #5 - OUTPUT | Number of fuel treatments accomplished by partnerships that met management objectives. | Intended to identify partnerships that have been developed and maintained to plan and implement collaborative fuels treatments associated with protecting, restoring, or maintaining sagebrush-steppe ecosystems. These partnerships must be unique to the success of the project. | NFPORS and independent reporting system including Community Assistance data. | Number of Treatments. |