

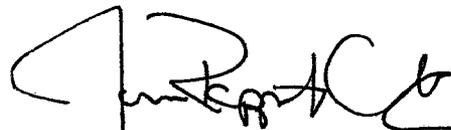


# U.S. FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE TRANSMITTAL SHEET

PART	SUBJECT	RELEASE NUMBER
621 FW 1-3	Fire Management	346
FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT	Policies and Responsibilities for Fire Management	DATE
Division of Refuges	Fire Mgt Preparedness and Planning Prescribed Fire Management	February 7, 2000

## EXPLANATION OF MATERIAL TRANSMITTED:

These chapters describe policies, objectives, definitions, and responsibilities for fire management. They reflect changes required by 620 DM 1 and 2 and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review Report, December 18, 1995.



DIRECTOR

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## FILING INSTRUCTIONS:

### Remove:

621 FW 1, 04/20/95, FWM 190 (2 sheets)  
621 FW 2, 04/03/95, FWM 185 (1 sheet)  
621 FW 1, 06/24/94, FWM 150 (1 sheet)

### Insert:

621 FW 1, 02/07/00, FWM 346 (2 sheets)  
621 FW 2, 02/07/00, FWM 346 (1 sheet)  
621 FW 1, 02/07/00, FWM 346 (1 sheet)

**3.1 What is the purpose of this chapter?** This chapter describes the basic policy guidance for our prescribed fire program. Further operational guidance is available in our Fire Management Handbook.

**3.2 What is a prescribed fire?** A prescribed fire is any fire ignited by our management actions to meet specific objectives. You must have an approved Fire Management Plan (FMP) which includes the use of prescribed fire. You must prepare a written Prescribed Fire Plan, meet NEPA requirements prior to ignition (621FW 2.4A(2)) and have the appropriate approvals. You can use prescribed fire in wilderness areas and proposed wilderness areas in accordance with established guidelines.

**A.** We consider management of naturally-ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific pre-stated resource management objectives in pre-defined geographic areas wildland fire use, and not a type of prescribed fire.

**B.** You may not allow a prescribed fire to burn without a current and valid prescription approved by the responsible agency administrator (line officer). The Prescribed Fire Plan must address the following elements:

- (1) Prescribed burn objectives and how they support the land use objectives for the area;
- (2) Expected fire behavior;
- (3) Buffer and safety zones;
- (4) Perimeter length and acreage burned limit;
- (5) Analysis of the cumulative effects of weather and drought on fire behavior;
- (6) Potential impacts on visitors, users, and local communities, both on and off site;
- (7) Considerations of environmental, economic, and social effects, both on and off site; and
- (8) Items to include in the burn day assessment during the go-no-go determination:
  - (a) Regional and national fire activity constraints; and
  - (b) The maximum number of fires that can burn in the planning area at one time.

**C.** The project leader will certify daily, in writing, that we expect any prescribed fire, including those in wilderness areas, lasting more than one burning period to remain in prescription during the next 24 hours. Adequate resources must be available to manage the fire, taking into consideration the reasonably foreseeable fuel, weather, and fire behavior conditions. Maintain certifications in your field office files, available for review.

**D.** If you determine a prescribed fire to be out of prescription, you must implement the contingency plan immediately. If the contingency plan is not successful, treat the fire as an unwanted wildland fire. The next actions taken will be to achieve protection objectives, and we will determine this through implementation of a Wildland Fire Situation Analysis.

**3.3 What about safety considerations?** Only trained and qualified personnel will conduct our prescribed fire operations, (232 FW 6, Firefighter Training). You will issue and require personnel to wear and use protective clothing and equipment as prescribed in 241 FW 3, Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), and 241 FW 7, Firefighting.

**3.4 Is smoke management important?** Visibility is a major consideration in smoke management. Your planning for prescribed fire must include the potential for hazardous situations, including impaired visibility created by smoke both on and off our lands. You must meet the provisions of the Clean Air Act and the State Implementation Plan (SIP).

**3.5 What consultation and coordination do we require?** All planning for prescribed fire must include consultation with appropriate State and local agencies. Your prescribed fire operations must comply with all State and local requirements. You must notify your cooperators when you ignite prescribed fires to ensure that you can quickly initiate and reinforce suppression actions if necessary. In addition, 620 DM 1.6 (C) requires you to prepare the appropriate agreements in all cases where fires are planned to cross boundaries between our lands and those controlled by another agency or private owner.

**3.6 Can we use contracts and cooperative agreements?** Local fire departments, qualified contractors or other cooperators can conduct prescribed fire operations on our lands. You must complete an agreement or contract clearly stating the conditions under which these individuals may conduct prescribed fire operations, liability waivers, qualification and PPE requirements or other items important to the burning operation.

**A. Contractors.** Private contractors who specialize in providing fire management services must meet our standards for qualifications and PPE. Your contract should specify these requirements as well as other standards or work accomplishments they are to meet.

**B. Cooperators.** Encourage your cooperators to meet our standards for qualification and PPE. Many local cooperators such as Volunteer Fire Departments cannot afford the PPE or the training to meet our standards, and we cannot force them. We should consider not using them in our prescribed fire program when this is the case. If you must use them, you may need to invite the cooperator to attend one of our training sessions prior to burning season or loan PPE to them during the burning operations. If an individual cooperator will be supervising FWS employees on the burn operation, he/she must meet our qualification and experience standards.

**3.7 What should my evaluation contain?** You must complete a written evaluation on all prescribed fires. Your evaluation must document the conditions under which you conducted the prescribed fire in order to evaluate how closely the fire conformed to planned behavior, what unanticipated difficulties were encountered during the action, and how well the fire accomplished the desired results.

**3.8 What about an escaped prescribed fire?** You must consider any prescribed fire that escapes the planned fire area (other than minor slopovers) an unwanted wildland fire. You must consider any burns outside of the written prescription (e.g., environmental conditions, fire behavior not listed in the written prescription, or will not meet objectives) an unwanted wildland fire. Determine further actions for an escaped prescribed fire through an analysis of alternative management strategies using the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis.

**3.9 When should I suspend operations?** You may conduct prescribed fire operations during National Planning Preparedness Level V if you get concurrence from your Regional and National Fire Management offices. You must consider your geographic area planning levels when conducting prescribed fires. Consult your geographic MAC Group in the decision making process. See the National Interagency Mobilization Guide for detailed steps in the approval process.

**3.10 Who needs to know about prescribed fire activities?** You must inform the public of prescribed fire activities using news releases, interpretive messages, and educational

programs. You must not conduct a prescribed fire without informing those people you will or might impact.

**3.11 How do I handle debris disposal?** You can use fire to remove wildland fuels (debris) generated in maintenance activities (such as agricultural waste, grass or brush mowing or clipping), in the removal of hazardous trees, or during construction activities. A Fire Management Officer must review the complexity of these debris disposal projects. You may use one Prescribed Fire Burn Plan to address all low complexity debris disposal projects for a unit, as long as the conditions under which you conduct the burning and the prescription is consistent among all the projects. You may use this Prescribed Fire Plan for multiple years if you review it annually.