UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240
June 21, 1995

In Reply Refer To:
8560, 9210 (420)
Affects MS 8560

EMS TRANSMISSION 6/23/95
Instruction Memorandum No. 95-141
Expires: 09/30/96

To		Initial	Date
1	SD		
2	ASD		
	ADMIN		
3	ECO		
4	OPER		
	EA		
	IE		

To: AD-400, SDs, SCD, Director, OF&A

From: Director

Subject: Revisions to the 8560 Manual "Management of Designated Wilderness Areas" Relating to Fire Management Policy

In January 1990 we issued Instruction Memorandum No. 90-221 which provided revised guidance to BLM Manual 8560, Management of Designated Wilderness Areas, relating to fire management policy. The 8560 Manual has not been revised since the issuance of this policy and the number of times an Instruction Memorandum can be renewed has expired. This Instruction Memorandum reissues the policy and includes a few minor updates. Please replace the previous guidance with this IM.

A multi-agency team was established by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to address problems experienced during the 1988 fire season and review fire management policies for National Parks and Wilderness Areas. The team found that the concept of letting fire play its natural ecological role in wilderness is sound, but policies needed to be strengthened and reaffirmed. The key point to note is that all unplanned fires in wilderness are classified as wildfires and must be suppressed if they are burning without a prescribed burn plan. Fires will not be allowed to burn without an approved prescribed burn plan that fully describes procedures and criteria for managing a prescribed natural fire. Prescribed burn plans should be a comprehensive and integral part of the Management Plan and should be developed with National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance.

The attached revisions are effective immediately and will be included in a future update of the 8560 Manual.

This IM may be interleaved with Manual Section 8560. Questions pertaining to this policy may be directed to Gary Pavek, WO(420), at (202) 452-7797.

Signed
Tom Walker
Assistant Director Staff, Resource
Assessment & Planning

Authenticated
Robert M. Williams
Headquarters Services Team,WO890

1 Attachment
1 - BLM Manual 8560 - Management of Designated Wilderness Areas (4pp)

.11A.2. FIRE, INSECTS, AND DISEASES. The BLM allows prescribed fire, insects, and diseases to play a natural role in the wilderness ecosystem, except where they threaten human life or property or would result in an unacceptable change to the wilderness resource. In the event that fire, insects, or disease within the wilderness threaten public welfare or nonwilderness resources existing outside the wilderness area, they must be controlled.

.13A. ACCEPTABLE TOOLS. Acceptable tools, equipment, and structures may include but are not limited to: existing fire towers, remote automatic weather stations where previously determined to be required, pit toilets, temporary roads, spraying equipment, hand tools, mechanized firefighting equipment (except earth moving equipment), caches, fencing, and prescribed fire. Structures will only be allowed if an overriding need can be made for their use in the Management Plan. This need would primarily be for the protection of human life, property, and public welfare. In special or emergency cases involving public welfare of wilderness visitors, protection of wilderness values, or situations that threaten life, property or the public welfare outside the wilderness, aircraft, motorboats, and motorized vehicles and mechanized equipment may be used.

.15C. CONTROL OF FIRES, INSECTS, AND DISEASES. Where fire, insects, and diseases threaten human life or property or would result in an unacceptable change to the wilderness resource, measures must be taken to control them. In the event that fire, insects, or disease within the wilderness threaten the public welfare or nonwilderness resources outside the wilderness area, they must be controlled. Allowable control actions must be specified in the Management Plan for each wilderness.

.34C.4. PRESCRIBED BURNING. Prescribed fire may be used as a management tool if carefully designed to maintain or enhance the wilderness resource. Prescribed fire is used only when the project can be accomplished without serious or long-lasting damage to the watershed or the area's wilderness character. Prescribed fire will not be permitted to only improve wildlife or livestock utilization. It may be used only for the following purposes:

a. It is needed to maintain the natural condition of a fire dependent ecosystem or to reintroduce fire where past strict wildfire control measures have interfered with natural ecological processes.

b. A primary value of a given wilderness will be sustained as a result of the burning.

c. It will promote the perpetuation of a threatened or endangered species.

.35 FIRE, INSECT, AND DISEASE MANAGEMENT.

A. FIRE MANAGEMENT.

1. OVERRIDING FIRE GUIDANCE. There are only two kinds of fires: prescribed fires and wildfires. Prescribed fire is the planned application of fire burning under specified conditions in a predetermined area to achieve the management objectives. Wildfire is an unplanned fire that is burning without a prescription.

2. WILDFIRES. All wildfires will be suppressed. Suppression actions in the wilderness must be executed to minimize surface disturbance and alterations of the natural landscape. Suppression costs are a consideration and must be minimized consistent with management objectives. An Escaped Fire Analysis will be prepared to govern all wildfires that escape initial attack. Methods and equipment which least alter the landscape or disturb the land surface are considered the best. Suppression structures and improvements must be located outside the wilderness, except those that are the minimum necessary to protect life, property, public welfare and wilderness objectives.

Although all wildfires will be suppressed, the fact that a wildfire occurs in a wilderness is not in itself an emergency. An emergency exists when a wildfire burning inside a wilderness boundary threatens human life, or property. An emergency also exists when there is a definite potential for a wildfire to exceed suppression efforts and burn beyond the wilderness boundary and endanger either human life, property, and the public welfare.

3. PRESCRIBED FIRES. Fire is normally a part of most ecosystems and human efforts to ban this ecological process has resulted in significant changes in the flora and the fauna of some areas. In order to meet wilderness objectives and to maintain the wilderness in a more natural state, it may be necessary to reintroduce fire.

All prescribed fires must be planned and approved in advance of ignition. Ignitions may be either scheduled events or unscheduled natural events, such as lightning. New naturally ignited prescribed fires will undergo a detailed risk analysis that will address the chances of successfully completing the project and the consequences of failure. Once a prescribed fire exceeds or is predicted to exceed the prescription, it will be considered a wildfire and cannot be returned to a prescribed fire status. Bureau personnel may be allowed to use prescribed fire, both planned ignition by Bureau personnel and natural ignition, for the following purposes:

a. To reintroduce or maintain the natural condition of a fire-dependent eosystem,

b. To restore fire where past strict fire control measures had interfered with natural, ecological processes,

c. Where a primary value of a given wilderness will be perpetuated as a result of the burning, or

d. Where it will perpetuate a threatened or endangered species.

4. REMOVAL OF EVIDENCE OF FIRE SUPPRESSION ACTIVITIES. All equipment used for fire suppression activities must be removed upon completion of use and all sites must be rehabilitated to as natural a state as possible.

5. FIRE DETECTION. Fire detection methods necessary to meet wilderness objectives that have the least permanent impact on wilderness values will be used. Structures such as lightning detection systems and lookouts may be maintained or constructed if they are the minimum necessary to achieve wilderness management objectives and there is no alternative detection method.

6. PRESUPPRESSION. Presuppression activities may be allowed where they meet wilderness management objectives and where necessary for the protection of the public welfare.

7. SUPPRESSION. Original text has been deleted or incorporated into .35A.2. Subsection A.7. is replaced with "Fire Management Planning" below.

7. FIRE MANAGEMENT PLANNING. (Replaces 7 above.) Wilderness fire considerations should be addressed at three levels of planning. Specific guidance for each level of planning is found in the relevant planning Manual Sections (1625, 8561, 9211). At a minimum the following items should be considered:

a. RESOURCE MANAGEMENT PLANS (RMP): General wilderness management objectives; historic fire occurrence; natural role of fire; role of fire with current vegetation; and fire management standards and guidelines.

b. MANAGEMENT PLANS: specific vegetation and fire-related objectives and considerations; protection standards; and acceptable control practices and tools which may be used during non emergencies.

c. OPERATIONAL PLANS (such as prescribed fire plans and preattack plans): site specific project information. Daily planning considerations must be made when prescribed fires are in progress. Once a wilderness prescribed fire burns for more than one day, it must be certified by the District Manager on a daily basis

to continue to allow it to burn. Daily certification will be based on the following information: (a) the burn is in prescription; (b) there are resources (physical and financial) and management capability available to maintain the fire in prescription throughout its projected life; (c) there are firefighting resources available to provide for suppression actions if the fire escapes; (d) an acceptable overall assessment of the risk that the burn will remain in prescription through projected completion; and (e) meets the National Preparedness Plan level restrictions. Without the documented certification that the criteria are being met, the burn will be classified a wildfire and suppressed.

8. FIRE MANAGEMENT PLANS. Incorporated in 7 above.

Directive forwarded to SD, CA-930, CA-940, and CA-944 from State Office Records Section on 06/26/95