

# USDI Bureau of Land Management Las Cruces District Office

## 2010 FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN



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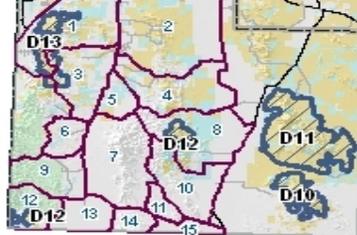
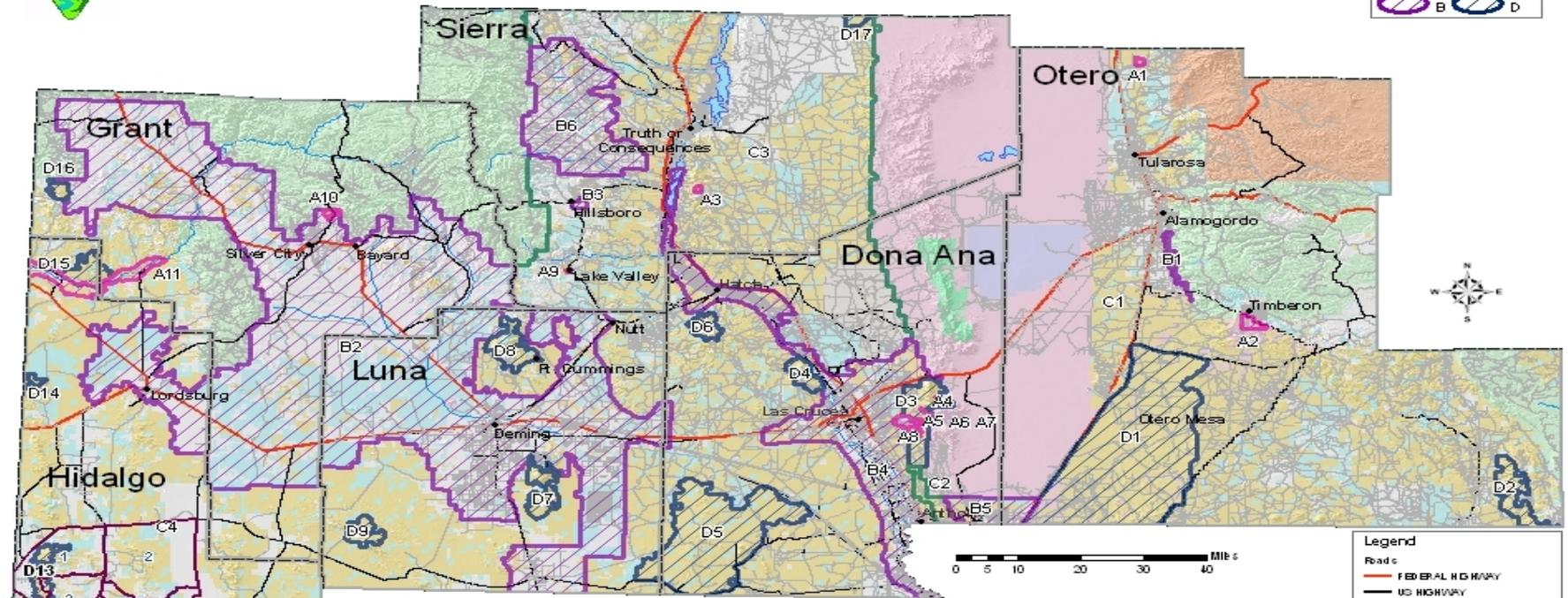
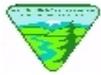
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# BLM Las Cruces District Office Map



- BOOTHHEEL FIRE MANAGEMENT**
- 1 Tank Mountain FMA
  - 2 Bull FMA
  - 3 Eyrant FMA
  - 4 Gillespie
  - 5 XT FMA
  - 6 Upham FMA
  - 7 Armas FMA
  - 8 Cowboy FMA
  - 9 Black Point FMA
  - 10 Rough Creek FMA
  - 11 Lynch FMA
  - 12 Cloverdale FMA
  - 13 Fitzpatrick FMA
  - 14 Pass FMA
  - 15 White Water FMA

- UNITS**
- A1 Tlame River Recreation Site and Petroglyph ACEC
  - A2 Timbison
  - A3 Caballo Mountain Commemorative Site
  - A4 Agave Spring Recreation Site
  - A5 La Cueva Recreation Site
  - A6 Cox Visitor Center
  - A7 Dripping Spring Recreation Site
  - A8 Lakeview Subdivision
  - A9 Lake Valley
  - A10 Elmor Alto
  - A11 Gila Loza and Malibu Box
  - B1 Sacramento Mountains WSA/ACEC
  - B2 Lordsburg/Deming/Silver City Tri-County Area
  - B3 Hillsboro
  - B4 Rio Grande River Corridor
  - B5 Chaparral Community
  - B6 White Rabbit Ranch
  - C1 Tularosa Basin/Otero Mesa
  - C2 Rio Grande Mountains
  - C3 Rio Grande Valley Uplands
  - C4 Boothheel Gila
  - D1 McCreary Range
  - D2 Balcon Hills Mountains WSA
  - D3 Organ Mountains WSA/ACEC
  - D4 Rio Hondo Mountains WSA/ACEC
  - D5 West Potrillo WSA/ACEC

- D6 Las Uvas WSA/ACEC
- D7 Florida Mountains WSA/ACEC
- D8 Coole's Range WSA/ACEC
- D9 Cedar Mountains WSA
- D10 Alamo-Huaco Mountains
- D11 Big Horn Mountains WSA/ACEC
- D12 Guadalupe Canyon/Cowboy Spring WSA
- D13 Gray Peak WSA/ACEC
- D14 Redondo Mountains WSA/ACEC
- D15 Elba Canal WSA
- D16 Apache Box WSA
- D17 Jornada del Muerto WSA

- Legend**
- Roads**
- FEDERAL HIGHWAY
  - US HIGHWAY
  - STATE HIGHWAY
  - COUNTY
  - OTHER
  - Boothheel Fire Management Area
- Lakes**
- Rivers**
- Bureau of Land Management
  - Dept. of Agriculture
  - Dept. of Defense
  - Forest Service
  - Fish & Wildlife Service
  - National Park Service
  - Private
  - State

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## **I. Introduction**

### **A. Purpose**

This Fire Management Plan is a strategic plan that implements decisions found in two currently approved Resource Management Plans (RMP), Mimbres RMP 1993 and White Sands RMP 1986 under the administration of the Bureau of Land Management-Las Cruces District Office (NM-LCD). It provides specific details of the fire program, including organization, facilities, equipment, activities, timing, locations, and related costs. This plan directs activities for fire and resource personnel to improve protection of human life and property through aggressive fire protection, reduction of hazardous fuels and restoration of fire adapted ecosystems. This management direction may be updated as a result of approved amendments to the Mimbres and White Sands RMP or other related planning documents. Each year adjustments will be made to the plan to reflect changes in the annual planning process. This document is also meant to be a working reference for fire program information.

### **B. Relationship to Environmental Compliance**

Decisions contained in the Mimbres and White Sands Resource Management Plans were amended by the Fire and Fuels Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) and Environmental Assessment for Public Land in New Mexico and Texas, BLM-NM-008-2824 (September 2004) and provides the basis for development of fire management objectives and constraints contained within this plan. The RMP and RMPA were prepared in compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969.

The Fire Management Plan (FMP) is a document that compiles land use decisions related to fire management from the RMP and is generally considered excluded from further NEPA analysis, provided it does not make decisions other than those in the RMP and other planning documents. Future site specific and project specific proposals to implement the RMP decisions will require additional environmental analysis and compliance with other relevant laws and regulations.

### **C. Collaboration**

This FMP encompasses 5,390,765 acres of BLM-managed lands within the NM-LCD. The boundaries of the NM-LCD are drawn along county lines and include the whole of Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, Dona Ana, Sierra and Otero counties. The NM-LCD includes parts of two Fire Management Zones (Gila-Las Cruces Zone and Pecos Zone), lands of 9 federal agencies, as well as state and private lands. An effective fire management program requires close coordination among local and regional jurisdictions. Information in this FMP will refine and strengthen the ongoing fire management coordination efforts of all the related agencies. On a national level, there is an ongoing initiative called Fire Program Analysis (FPA) which is an interagency effort to dissolve boundaries and focus on fire management on a regional scale. This FMP will reflect the changes in policy and direction as/if FPA is implemented in the future.

The Gila/Las Cruces Zone Joint Powers Agreements/Operating Plan and the Pecos Zone Joint Powers Agreement/Operating Plan (JPAs) are currently utilized to coordinate the fire

management program of the NM-LCD. These documents are tiered to the New Mexico Joint Powers Master Agreement. Each of these plans are based on Fire Management Zone jurisdictions within the Pecos Zone and the Gila-Las Cruces Zone. The JPAs outline agreements and commitments amongst the various federal agencies and the State of New Mexico for wildland fire protection, joint fire management and large fire support. The agencies jointly conduct mutual interest projects, within their authority, to maintain or improve fire management capability. For instance, NM-LCD, Gila NF, Lincoln NF and County officials of Grant, Sierra, Hidalgo and Otero counties have collaborated to complete county-wide Community Wildfire Protection Plans. These efforts are part of the community assistance/protection planning efforts developed through public meetings with the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) working groups in these counties. Future projects may involve such activities as prescribed fire, fuels management, mutual aid, fire preparedness, fire rehabilitation, fire prevention education, public affairs, Rural Fire Assistance (RFA) and fire planning.

NM-LCD provides a permanent full-time dispatcher to the Silver City Dispatch Center.

A number of agencies have been consulted and are considered partners in the fire management program within the area administered by the Las Cruces District Office. Major partners include:

- Gila National Forest
- Lincoln National Forest
- Coronado National Forest
- US Fish and Wildlife Service-San Andres NWR
- Natural Resource Conservation Service
- NM State Forestry-Capitan and Socorro Districts
- US Dept of Defense-Fort Bliss, White Sands Missile Range and Holloman AFB
- US National Park Service-White Sands National Monument
- US Bureau of Reclamation
- US Bureau of Indian Affairs-Mescalero Agency
- County Governments of Grant, Hidalgo, Luna, Sierra, Dona Ana and Otero Counties
- USDA-Jornada Experimental Range
- New Mexico State University
- The Animas Foundation
- The Turner Foundation
- Malpais Borderlands Group
- The Nature Conservancy

In the future, NM-LCD will continue to pursue opportunities in areas of shared suppression resources, facilities, cooperative agreements, stewardship, prevention, education and training with interagency partners.

## **D. Authorities**

Current District Office policy regarding fire management activities is consistent with Departmental Manual 910 and BLM Manual 9200 direction.

The Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976 (FLPMA) (Public Law 94-579; 43 U.S.C. 1701) establishes the primary authority and provides guidance for how the public lands are to be managed by the BLM. In managing public lands on the basis of multiple use and sustained yield, FLPMA requires that the quality of scientific, scenic, historical, ecological, environmental, air and atmospheric, water resource and archeological values be protected.

Additional authorities for this FMP include:

- Protection Act of September 20, 1922 (42 Stat. 857; U.S.C. 594).
- Taylor Grazing Act of June 28, 1934 (48 Stat. 1269; U.S.C. 315).
- Reciprocal Fire Protection Act of May 27, 1955(69 Stat. 66; 42 U.S.C. 1856, 1856a).
- Economy Act of June 30, 1932 (47 Stat. 417; 31 U.S.C. 686).
- Wild Free-Roaming Horse and Burro Act of 1971, as amended (PL 92-195)
- Public Rangeland Improvement Act of 1978 (PL 95-514)
- Disaster Relief Act, Section 417 (Public Law 93-288).
- Annual Appropriations Acts for the Department of the Interior.
- United States Department of the Interior Manual (910 DM 1.3).
- 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy.
- 2001 Updated Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy Update).
- 1998 Departmental Manual 620 Chapter 1, Wildland Fire Management General Policy and Procedures.
- The Multiple-Use Sustained-Yield Act of June 12, 1960
- The Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of August 17, 1974
- CFR Title 43 (1610) (BLM's planning guidance and regulations); BLM Manual 1601
- National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 and Title 40 CFR Part 1500
- Endangered Species Act of 1973, as amended
- Wilderness Act of 1964
- Clean Water Act and Clean Air Act 1-8
- National Historic Preservation Act 1966, as amended
- Native American Consultation per Executive Orders 12866, 13084 et al.,
- The President's National Energy Policy (Executive Order 13212)
- Healthy Forests Restoration Act, December 2003 (PL 108-148)

## **II. Relationship to Land Management Planning and Fire Policy**

This plan was developed for all areas subject to wildland fires within the Las Cruces District Office and is in compliance with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review-1995 and 2001; the Interagency Fire Management Plan Template; and A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment: 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan.

## A. Management Plan and Policy Documents Concerning Fire Management

- Interagency Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation Procedures and Reference Guide, Sept. 2006
- Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, January 2001
- Resource Management Plans, White Sands Resource Area, 1986; Mimbres Resource Area, 1993 (updated by the RMPA for Fire and Fuels, 2004)
- Federal Land Policy Management Act 1976 (FLPMA)
- Fire and Fuels Management Plan Amendment (RMPA) and Environmental Assessment for Public Land in New Mexico and Texas, BLM-NM-008-2824 (September 2004)
- State of New Mexico Joint Powers Master Agreement
- Cooperative Arrangement between Gila District/AZ/BLM and Las Cruces District/BLM and Coronado National Forest-May, 2008
- Mexico/United States Wildfire Protection Agreement (1999)

The *2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy* provides the philosophy and policy foundation for federal interagency fire management activities conducted under the National Fire Plan. The National Fire Plan is not a single, cohesive document. Rather, it is composed of various documents including (1) a September 8, 2000, report *Managing the Impact of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment* from the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to the President of the United States in response to the wildland fires in 2000; (2) congressional direction accompanying substantial new appropriations for wildland fire management for fiscal year 2001; (3) a report in 1999 from the US Forest Service, *Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire-Adapted Ecosystems: A Cohesive Strategy* in response to the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) Report, *Western National Forests: A Cohesive Strategy is Needed to Address Catastrophic Wildfire Threats* (GAO/RCED-99-65); (4) several approved and draft strategies to implement all or parts of the plan.

The 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy directs Federal agencies to achieve a balance between fire suppression to protect life, property, and resources and fire use to regulate fuels and maintain healthy ecosystems. The policy provides nine guiding principles that are fundamental to the success of the Federal wildland fire management program:

1. Firefighter and public safety is the first priority in every fire management activity.
2. The role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent will be incorporated into the planning process.
3. Fire Management Plans, programs, and activities support land and resource management plans and their implementation.
4. Sound risk management is a foundation for all fire management activities.
5. Fire management programs and activities are economically viable, based upon values to be protected, costs, and land and resource management objectives.
6. Fire Management Plans and activities are based upon the best available science.

7. Fire Management Plans and activities incorporate public health and environmental quality considerations.
8. Federal, State, tribal, local, interagency, and international coordination and cooperation are essential.
9. Standardization of policies and procedures among federal agencies is an ongoing objective.

Additional guidance can be found in the White Sands and Mimbres RMP regarding fire management in the Las Cruces District Office:

All fire must be suppressed if it threatens life, property, if smoke management becomes a problem, if the fire is man-caused or if the area does not have the necessary planning documents completed for fire management to accomplish resource objectives.

An adequately equipped, well-trained fire management staff is needed to make informed, knowledgeable decisions.

No wildland fire situation, with the possible exception of threat to human survival, requires exposure of firefighters and equipment to life threatening situations.

A response to all wildfires needs to be evaluated based on safety, values at risk, burning conditions, time of year and resource availability.

A Wildfire Decision Support System (WFDSS) document will be prepared to govern suppression actions for wildfires which escape initial attack.

Fire suppression activities in wilderness or wilderness study areas (WSAs) will be conducted in accordance with guidance contained in wilderness fire plans. Wilderness not covered by a specific fire plan shall have fire managed in accordance with the *Interim Guidance for Fire Suppression in Wilderness*.

Prescribed fires will be preplanned and approved by the District Manager and will comply with the Federal Clean Air Act in cooperation with Federal, State and local agencies. Cultural resources will be protected and maintained in accordance with protocols set forth by the New Mexico State Historical Preservation Office.

### **III. Wildland Fire Management Strategies**

#### **A. General Management Considerations**

The first priority in every fire program is to provide for firefighter and public safety. The protection of human life is the single, overriding suppression priority. Setting priorities among protecting communities, properties, improvements, natural and cultural resources, will be done based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the cost of protection. Once people have been committed to an incident, these human resources become the highest value to

be protected. Every effort will be made to suppress fires at a minimum cost, but never at the expense of firefighter and public safety.

In order to comply with direction provided in the National Fire Plan, the RMPA for Fire and Fuels and NM-LCD will implement the following fire management guidance:

- Use fire to restore and/or sustain ecosystem health.
  - Identify appropriate management response goals, objectives, and constraints by specific Fire Management Units (FMU) within NM-LCD. All wildland fire management activities will be managed as described in the FMU guidance outlined in Chapter III, section D of this Fire Management Plan.
  - Work collaboratively with communities at risk within the WUI to develop plans for risk reduction. The Federal Register Notice list for communities at risk is located at: <http://www.fireplan.gov/> and [http://www.fireplan.gov/communities\\_at\\_risk.cfm](http://www.fireplan.gov/communities_at_risk.cfm) and is not totally inclusive of all communities.
  - Work collaboratively with regional partners in fire and resource management across agency boundaries.
  - Within prescriptive parameters, allow fire to protect, maintain, and enhance resources. Allow fire to function in its ecological role when appropriate for the site and situation.
  - Employ fire prevention strategies that reduce human ignitions with special emphasis in campgrounds and transportation corridors.
  - Use fire as a management tool to improve the ecological condition of range ecosystems and maintain natural plant community diversity.

## **B. Wildland Fire Management Goals**

The 2001 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy states, in broad terms, how wildland fire will be managed:

1. **Safety** - Firefighter and public safety is the first priority. All Fire Management Plans and activities must reflect this commitment.
2. **Fire Management and Ecosystem Sustainability** - The full range of fire management activities will be used to help achieve ecosystem sustainability, including its interrelated ecological, economic, and social components.
3. **Response to Wildland Fire** - Fire, as a critical natural process, will be integrated into land and resource management plans and activities on a landscape scale, and across agency boundaries. Response to wildland fire is based on ecological, social, and legal consequences of the fire. The circumstances under which a fire occurs, and the likely

consequences on firefighter and public safety and welfare, natural and cultural resources, and values to be protected dictate the appropriate management response (AMR) to the fire.

4. **Use of Wildland Fire** - Wildland fire will be used to protect, maintain, and enhance resources and, as nearly as possible, be allowed to function in its natural ecological role. Use of fire will be based on approved Fire Management Plans and will follow specific prescriptions contained in operational plans.
5. **Rehabilitation and Restoration** - Rehabilitation and restoration efforts will be undertaken to protect and sustain ecosystems, public health, and safety, and to help communities protect infrastructure.
6. **Protection Priorities** - The protection of human life is the single, overriding priority. Setting priorities among protecting human communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources will be based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection. Once people have been committed to an incident, these human resources become the highest value to be protected.
7. **Wildland Urban Interface** - The operational roles of federal agencies as partners in the Wildland Urban Interface are wildland firefighting, hazardous fuels reduction, cooperative prevention and education, and technical assistance. Structural fire suppression is the responsibility of tribal, State, or local governments. Federal agencies may assist with exterior structural protection activities under formal Fire Protection Agreements that specify the mutual responsibilities of the partners, including funding.
8. **Planning** - Every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved Fire Management Plan. Fire Management Plans are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires based on the area's approved land management plan. Fire Management Plans must provide for firefighter and public safety; include fire management strategies, tactics, and alternatives; address values to be protected and public health issues; and be consistent with resource management objectives, activities of the area and environmental laws and regulations.
9. **Science** - Fire Management Plans and programs will be based on a foundation of sound science. Research will support ongoing efforts to increase our scientific knowledge of biological, physical, and sociological factors. Information needed to support fire management will be developed through an integrated interagency fire science program. Scientific results must be made available to managers in a timely manner and must be used in the development of land management plans, Fire Management Plans, and implementation plans.
10. **Preparedness** - Agencies will ensure their capability to provide safe, cost-effective fire management programs in support of land and resource management plans through appropriate planning, staffing, training, equipment, and management oversight.

11. **Suppression** - Fires are suppressed at minimum cost, considering firefighter and public safety, benefits, and values to be protected, consistent with resource objectives.
12. **Prevention** - Agencies will work together and with their partners and other affected groups and individuals to prevent unauthorized ignition of wildland fires.
13. **Standardization** - Agencies will use compatible planning processes, funding mechanisms, training and qualification requirements, operational procedures, value-to-be-protected methodologies, and public education programs for all fire management activities.
14. **Interagency Cooperation and Coordination** - Fire management planning, preparedness, prevention, suppression, fire use, restoration and rehabilitation, monitoring, research, and education will be conducted on an interagency basis with the involvement of cooperators and partners.
15. **Communication and Education** - Agencies will enhance knowledge and understanding of wildland fire management policies and practices through internal and external communication and education programs. These programs will be continuously improved through the timely and effective exchange of information among all affected agencies and organizations.
16. **Agency Administrators and Employee Roles** - Agency administrators will ensure that their employees are trained, certified, and made available to participate in the wildland fire program locally, regionally, and nationally as the situation demands. Employees with operational, administrative, or other skills will support the wildland fire program as necessary. Agency administrators are responsible and will be held accountable for making employees available.
17. **Evaluation** - Agencies will develop and implement a systematic method of evaluation to determine effectiveness of projects through implementation of the 2001 Federal Fire Policy. The evaluation will assure accountability, facilitate resolution of areas of conflict, and identify resource shortages and agency priorities.

### **C. Wildland Fire Management Options**

The NM-LCD Fire Program will provide an appropriate management response on all wildland fires. The overriding emphasis will be, first and foremost, fire fighter and public safety. Secondly, to minimize suppression costs with benefits and values to be protected consistent with resource objectives, standards and guidelines. Thirdly, to consider, where appropriate, the possible benefits to ecosystem components from the effects of wildland fire on the landscape. The appropriate tool to determine the expected fire conditions within an ecosystem is the Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC). A fire regime is the period of time in which a wildfire naturally occurs on a given part of the landscape. FRCC is a three-part measure of the departure from historical or natural conditions. An FRCC 1 means that the vegetation, fuel composition

and fire severity and frequency are within an historical range of variability. FRCC 2 means there is a moderate departure from the historical variability of vegetation types, fuels characteristics and fire return intervals. FRCC 3 means that there is a high departure from these historical characteristics.

Every attempt will be made to respond to each wildland fire in a timely manner with a response based upon established fire management direction as documented in the fire management plan. The use of multiple management options for wildfire responses will allow land managers to tailor preplanned wildland fire dispatch strategies to meet objectives established in resource management plans and their associated implementation plans.

Within the lands administered by the Las Cruces District Office, four fire management categories are used to describe, in general terms, the actions that constitute the management response within each Fire Management Unit (FMU):

### **1. Category A - Areas where wildfire is not desired at all.**

*General description:* This category includes areas where mitigation and suppression is required to prevent direct threats to life or property.

*Fire mitigation considerations:* Emphasis should be focused on those actions that will reduce unwanted ignitions and reduce losses from unwanted wildfires. [Note: *Fire Mitigation* is defined as: Those fire prevention and education actions that reduce unwanted human-caused ignitions and those fuels management activities that reduce undesirable impacts and loss to life, property and natural and cultural resources.]

*Fire suppression considerations:* Emphasis should be placed on prevention, detection and rapid suppression response.

*Fuel treatment considerations:* Non-fire fuel treatments should be employed. Pile burning may be an acceptable practice where fuel conditions warrant and mitigation measures such as burning in wet weather conditions and/or lining of piles are put into place. Under favorable conditions, broadcast RX burning over small, well-protected areas may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

### **2. Category B: Areas where wildfire is not desired because of current conditions.**

*General description:* These are ecosystems (including some urban-interface areas) where an unplanned ignition could have negative effects unless/until some form of mitigation takes place.

*Fire mitigation considerations:* Emphasize prevention/mitigation programs that reduce unwanted fire ignitions and resource threats.

*Fire suppression/use considerations:* For unplanned wildfire, suppression is the objective of this category.

*Fuel treatment considerations:* Fire and non-fire fuels treatments are utilized to reduce the hazardous effects of unplanned wildfire. Restorative treatments may consist of multiple non-fire treatments before the use of fire will be considered.

**3. Category C: Areas where wildland fire is desired, but there are significant constraints that must be considered for its use.**

*General description:* Areas where significant ecological, social or political constraints must be considered. These constraints could include air quality, threatened and endangered species considerations (effect of fire on survival of species), or wildlife habitat considerations.

*Fire mitigation considerations:* Programs should reduce unwanted fire ignitions and resource threats.

*Fire suppression/use considerations:* Resource considerations could be described in terms of maximum burn acreage, in terms of time of year (e.g., spring only), or as desired burned acres per decade from all types of fire. Areas in this category would generally receive lower suppression priority in multiple wildfire situations than would areas in the A or B categories.

*Fuel treatment considerations:* Fire and non-fire fuels treatments may be utilized to ensure constraints are met or to reduce any hazardous effects of unplanned wildfire.

**4. Category D: Areas where wildland fire is desired, and there are few or no constraints for its use.**

*General Description:* Areas where unplanned and planned wildland fire may be used to achieve desired objectives such as to improve vegetation, wildlife habitat or watershed conditions.

*Fire Mitigation Considerations:* Implement programs that reduce unwanted human-caused ignitions, as needed.

*Fire suppression/use considerations:* These areas offer the greatest opportunity to take advantage of the full range of options available for managing wildfire under the appropriate management response. Resource use considerations similar to those described for Category C may be identified if needed to achieve resource objectives. Areas in this category would be the lowest suppression priority in a multiple fire situation.

*Fuel treatment considerations:* There is generally less need for fuel treatment in this category. If treatment is necessary however, both fire and non-fire treatments may be utilized.

**D. Description of Wildland Fire Management Strategies by Fire Management Unit**

The definitions and boundaries of each FMU located within the Las Cruces District Office were created after consultation with a variety of resource professionals. The following table lists priorities for fire management for each FMU in the LCDO. Each FMU is distinct, either by

resource values, topography, political boundaries or fuel types and represents the collaborative efforts of many individuals.

<b>FMU</b>	<b>Suppression</b>	<b>WFU</b>	<b>Fuels Treatment</b>	<b>Community Assistance/ Protection</b>
<b>A1. Three Rivers Recreation Site and Petroglyph ACEC</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>A2. Timberon</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>A3. Caballo Mountain Communication Site</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>A4. Aguirre Springs Recreation Site</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>A5. La Cueva Recreation Site</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>A6. Cox Visitor Center</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>A7. Dripping Springs Recreation Site</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>A8. Talavera Subdivision</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>A9. Lake Valley</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>A10. Pinos Altos</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>A11. Gila Lower and Middle Box</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>B1. Sacramento Escarpment WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>B2. Lordsburg, Deming, Silver City-Tri County</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>B3. Hillsboro</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>B4. Rio Grande Corridor</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>
<b>B5. Chaparral Community</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>HIGH</b>
<b>B6. Winston/Ladder Ranch</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>C1. Tularosa Basin/Otero Mesa</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>
<b>C2. Franklin Mountains</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>C3. Rio Grande Valley Uplands</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>
<b>C4. Bootheel/Gila</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>
<b>D1. McGregor Range</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D2. Brokeoff Mountain WSA</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D3. Organ Mountain WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>

<b>FMU</b>	<b>Suppression</b>	<b>WFU</b>	<b>Fuels Treatment</b>	<b>Community Assistance/ Protection</b>
<b>D4. Robledo Mountains WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D5. West Potrillos WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D6. Las Uvas WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D7. Florida Mountains WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D8. Cooke's Range WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D9. Cedar Mountains WSA</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D10. Alamo-Hueco Mountains</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D11. Big Hatchet Mountains WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D12. Guadalupe Canyon Cowboy Springs WSA</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D13. Grey Peak WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D14. Peloncillo Mountains WSA/ACEC</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>MEDIUM</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D15. Blue Creek WSA</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D16. Apache Box WSA</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>
<b>D17. Jornada Del Muerto WSA(managed by Socorro FO)</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>HIGH</b>	<b>LOW</b>	<b>LOW</b>

The one common goal for all FMUs is that public and firefighter safety is the number 1 objective all of the time.

## **THREE RIVERS RECREATION SITE AND PETROGLYPH ACEC**

Category/Number: **A-1**

**1. Location** – This unit comprises 1,040 acres of BLM administered land and is located 17 miles north of Tularosa, NM in Otero County.

**2. Characteristics** – The Three Rivers Petroglyph Site is managed to protect and interpret the area's unique cultural resources, which include over 20,000 petroglyphs and a restored prehistoric Indian village. Facilities include picnic shelters, interpretative kiosks, hiking trails and toilets. Visitor usage varies between 20,000 and 24,000 visits annually.

Vegetation is composed primarily of creosote, mesquite and desert grasslands typical of Chihuahuan Desert. The southern portion of the ACEC is a riparian corridor dominated by salt cedar with remnants of a broadleaf cottonwood, velvet ash, and Gooding willow community. In addition, a remnant stand of mature velvet ash and box elder persists on a bench above the active stream channel.

Topography of the area consists of rolling, rocky basaltic hills and a valley bottom consisting of clay and alkali soils.

Management of wildlife and special status species will continue to be handled under guidance in the White Sands RMP. There are no species of concern identified in this FMU.

**3. Wildland Fire History-** There have not been any fires recorded in the FMU during the period 1984-2009.

**4. Fire regime/condition class-**The creosote-mesquite scrublands are an invasion of desert grasslands and are an indicator of Fire Regime Condition Class (FRCC) 2. The invasion of salt cedar in the riparian area also indicates FRCC 2

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints-**The cultural and recreation resources of the unit are at risk from wildfire effects.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk within the FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives:**

a. Protect cultural and recreation resources in the area from fire by suppressing all fires in the FMU.

b. Change approximately 200 acres that are in FRCC 2 to FRCC 1 using a combination of pile burning and mechanical treatments to accomplish the objective.

## **8. Fire Management Strategies-**

- a. Wildfire for resource benefit–This is not an appropriate management strategy for this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire – There are opportunities for pile burning in the riparian areas to reduce non-native plant species after mechanical treatments to reduce fuel loadings. Approximately 200 acres over a ten year period would be treated along the riparian corridor.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments –
  1. Mechanical- Brush removal using chainsaws and hand tools near the recreation sites followed by chipping. There is a need to remove about 5 acres of hazard fuel with re-treatment needed every five years.
  2. Chemical-May be considered as needed by a site-specific plan.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation– Reseeding of native grasses, erosion control devices and fencing to control livestock should be used to rehabilitate the riparian corridor after any fire.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-The goal is to suppress all fires at < 5 acres in size 95% of the time. Direct attack using engines from all available agencies until fire is controlled.

## **TIMBERON**

### **Category/Number-A-2**

**1. Location** - The unit is approximately 30 miles southeast of Cloudcroft, New Mexico in the Sacramento Mountains. The mean elevation of the unit is approximately 7000 feet. The unit consists of 827 acres of BLM land and 4,148 acres of military withdrawn land. The FMU is adjacent to the town of Timberon.

**2. Characteristics**-Timberon is a mountain resort community consisting of scattered dwellings set amid a ponderosa pine forest. There are approximately 700 full and part-time residents in the area. The FMU lies to the south and west of the community and is composed of BLM lands that are currently withdrawn for military purposes. Due to the extent of the wildland-urban interface, the Timberon area has been the focus of a major fuels reduction project by NM-LCD. A fuel break and associated thinning projects on BLM lands south and west of the community have been ongoing with more work planned for the future.

Vegetation within the FMU is composed mainly of pinyon pine, juniper, hackberry, oak species, ponderosa pine, mixed desert and mountain grasses, mountain mahogany, agave and cactus.

The soils in the area are of different types. Gravelly soils, sandy and loamy soils and rock outcrop soils are common types found in the FMU. The most common soil type in the FMU is the rock outcrop torriorthents. It is a moderately well drained soil that formed in alluvium and colluvium deposits on the mountains.

Cultural and recreation resources are abundant in the area. There are numerous agave pits within the FMU which are related to use by the Mescalero Apache Tribe. Recreation usage in the

village of Timberon and in the FMU is a major concern. The area supports a high number of visitors throughout the year, and has numerous developed and undeveloped privately owned lots. Although the US Army prohibits unauthorized entrance to the FMU, a large number of trespasses occur due to the accessibility and adjacent human occupied dwellings.

**3. Wildland fire history** - There have been numerous man-caused and naturally caused fires in the forested areas adjacent to the FMU. However, there are no recorded fires within the FMU since 1984.

**4. Fire regime/Condition Class** –Currently the overall FRCC of the FMU is 2. This is due to cattle grazing and fire exclusion. The pinyon-juniper woodlands, which dominate the FMU, are even-aged stands in an overcrowded vegetative state with high mortality occurring from insect and disease outbreaks.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints** - The cultural, recreation, human and wildlife resources within and adjacent to the FMU are at risk from wildland fires.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are areas adjacent to the FMU that have both fulltime and intermittent human habitation. Timberon has been identified as one of the twenty communities most at risk from wildfire in New Mexico and is listed in the Federal Register as such.

## **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect life and property in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing all wildland fires.
- b. Protect cultural and natural resources in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing all wildland fires.
- c. Using pile burning and mechanical treatments, change approximately 150 acres/year that are in a FRCC 2 to FRCC 1.

## **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for resource benefit– This is not an appropriate strategy for this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire-There are opportunities for pile burning in the shrub dominated areas and the pinyon-juniper woodlands to reduce the hazardous fuel load and reduce the likelihood of a catastrophic fire. There is an ongoing BLM project of pile burning after mechanical treatments to reduce fuel loadings.
- c. Non-fire fuels treatments –
  1. Mechanical- Brush removal using chainsaws and hand tools in the FMU to reduce the fire hazard. This is to be followed by pile burning and/or chipping where feasible. There is an ongoing project in conjunction with the military to create a shaded fuel break adjacent to the community of Timberon. Approximately 100 acres/year of mechanical fuel reduction projects are planned for 10 years in this FMU. Over 450 acres have been treated as of FY 2010.
  2. Chemical – No projects are planned for chemical treatments but may be considered as needed by a site specific plan.

- d. Post fire rehabilitation and/or actions needed for restoration –It is anticipated that future fires, either natural or human caused will require some rehabilitation. All fires > 100 acres or with slopes > 20% will require reseeding and erosion control devices.
- e. Suppression/Tactics- The Timberon VFD, NM-LCD engines and the USFS/Lincoln NF will respond to all fires in the area. The goal is to keep all fires in the FMU < 5 acres in size 95% of the time.

## **CABALLO MOUNTAIN COMMUNICATION SITE**

### **Category/Number A-3**

**1. Location** – The unit is approximately 10 miles southeast of Truth or Consequences (T or C), New Mexico in the Caballo Mountain range. There is a gain of roughly four thousand feet in elevation from T or C to the Caballo Mountain Communication Site. The mean elevation of the FMU is approximately 7500 feet. The FMU contains 793 acres of BLM land.

**2. Characteristics**-The Caballo Mountain Communication Site consists of a number of tall towers and small buildings perched atop the Caballo Mountains and contains a variety of electronic equipment for the purpose of enhancing communication networks across southern New Mexico.

Vegetation within the FMU is composed of pinyon pine, juniper, hackberry, oak brush, mixed desert grasses, mountain mahogany and cactus. Western aspects are extremely steep with rocky faces, while the east aspect slopes are less abrupt in nature and contain dense stands of pinyon/juniper.

The soils in the area are of different types. Gravelly soils, sandy and loamy soils and rock outcrop soils are common types found in the FMU. The most common soil type in the FMU is the rock outcrop torriorthents. It is a moderately well drained soil that formed in alluvium and colluvium deposits on the mountains.

**3. Wildland fire history** - From the 1202 database, from 1984-present, the FMU has not experienced any fires.

**4. Fire regime/Condition Class** –Currently the area is FRCC 2. This is due mainly to fire exclusion and cattle grazing.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints** - The communications equipment within the FMU are at risk.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk within the FMU.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect life and property in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing all fires.

- b. Protect communication resources in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing all fires.
- c. Change the areas that are presently in a FRCC 2 to FRCC 1 using a combination of pile burning and mechanical treatments. Optimally, 40 acres/year for 10 years would be treated.

## 8. Fire Management Strategies

- a. Wildfire for resource benefit– This is not an appropriate strategy for this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire- There is a project with planned pile burning after mechanical treatments to reduce fuel loadings. 40 acres have been mechanically treated and 15 acres have been burned.
- c. Non-fire fuels treatments –
  - 1. Mechanical-Brush removal using chainsaws and hand tools in the FMU to reduce the fire hazard, followed by pile burning and/or chipping where feasible. This is an ongoing project to create a shaded fuel break near the Caballo Mountain Communication Site.
  - 2. Chemical – may be considered as needed by a site specific plan.
- d. Post fire rehabilitation and/or actions needed for restoration – It is not anticipated that future fires, either natural or human caused will require rehabilitation. .
- e. Suppression/Tactics-Initial attack actions will be initiated by using closest forces concept. The goal is to suppress all fires in the FMU and contain them at <5 acres 95% of the time.

## AGUIRRE SPRING RECREATION SITE

Category/Number- **A4**

**1. Location** – The unit is approximately 14 miles northeast of Las Cruces, five miles south of Highway 70 on the east side of to the Organ Mountains. The mean elevation of the unit is approximately 5300 feet. The unit consists of a total of 37 acres.

**2. Characteristics**-The Aguirre Springs Recreation Site is a popular camping and picnicking site and contains several miles of well-used hiking trails. The BLM manages a campground in the FMU and has two group camping sites and 55 family sites. The area is managed primarily for recreation. The area supports a high number of visitors throughout the year.

Vegetation within the FMU is composed mainly of juniper, several oak species, hackberry, mixed desert grasses, mountain mahogany and cactus. The vegetation of the riparian areas that border the intermittent streams found in the unit is comprised of juniper and oak woodlands with shrub, cacti and grasses underneath.

The soils in the area are of different types depending on location in the FMU. Gravelly soils, sandy and loamy soils and rock outcrop soils are common types found in the FMU. The most common soil type in the FMU is the rock outcrop torriothents.

**3. Wildland fire history** - From the 1202 database from 1980-present, there have been two fires within the FMU. However, there have been several human and natural caused fires in the surrounding area.

- 4. Fire regime/Condition Class** –. Currently the area is FRCC 1.
- 5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints** – The cultural and recreational resources within the FMU dictate that suppression of any wildfire take place.
- 6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in the FMU.
- 7. Fire Management Objectives**
  - a. Protect cultural and natural resources in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing all fires.
  - b. Reduce the fuel loading on 5 acres/year for five years to help create safety zones to ensure human safety in the Aguirre Springs Recreation Area.
- 8. Fire Management Strategies**
  - a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– This is not an appropriate strategy for this FMU.
  - b. Prescribed Fire- There is the possibility of pile burning after mechanical treatments to reduce fuel loadings.
  - c. Non-fire fuels treatments –
    - 1. Mechanical- Brush removal using chainsaws and hand tools in the FMU to reduce the fire hazard is allowed. This may be followed by pile burning and chipping where feasible. Five acres/year of hazard fuel reduction is the goal in this FMU.
    - 2. Chemical – may be considered as needed by a site specific plan.
  - d. Post fire rehabilitation and/or actions needed for restoration – There has been no rehabilitation of previous fires in this area. The reseeding of native grasses will occur on all fires > 5 acres in size.
  - e. Suppression/Tactics-The BLM has initial attack responsibility for all fires in this FMU. Neighboring fire units from WSMR and Organ VFD will be dispatched. The goal is to keep all fires at less than five acres in size 95% of the time.

<b>LA CUEVA RECREATION SITE</b>	<b>CATEGORY/NUMBER A-5</b>
<b>COX VISITOR CENTER</b>	<b>A-6</b>
<b>DRIPPING SPRINGS RECREATION SITE</b>	<b>A-7</b>

- 1. Location** – The three units are located approximately 12 miles east of Las Cruces in the foothills leading up to the Organ Mountains. The elevation of the units ranges from roughly 5,500 to 5,900 feet. The units consist of a total of 122 acres of BLM land.
- 2. Characteristics-** Cultural and recreation resources are abundant in the area. Several historic wooden and brick buildings are found within the FMU along with a prehistoric cave dwelling that has been partially excavated. The BLM owns and manages a campground and visitor center within the FMU. Recreation usage in the FMU is also a concern, there are over 14 miles of maintained hiking and recreation trails in the area.

Vegetation on the alluvial plains is composed mainly of creosote, mixed desert grasses, shrub lands and cactus. The vegetation of the riparian areas that border the intermittent streams found in the combined units is comprised of salt cedar, hackberry, desert willow and oak woodlands with a forb, shrub and grass understory.

The soils in the area are of different types depending on location in the FMUs. Gravelly soils, sandy and loamy aridisol soils and rock outcrop soils are the most common types found in the FMU.

The area is managed primarily for recreation use. There is a fenced area that excludes cattle grazing from the FMU. This area supports a high number of bird, mammal and reptile species.

**3. Wildland fire history** -From 1984-present, there has been 1 man caused fire within the FMU. The Dripping Springs Fire of 2008 burned @ 60 acres of this FMU.

**4. Fire regime/Condition Class** – Currently the overall FRCC is 2. This is due to cattle grazing and fire exclusion over many years in the area.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints** - The cultural, recreation and wildlife resources within the FMU are worthy of protection.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

#### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect cultural and natural resources in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing all fires within the FMU.
- b. Move 10 acres/ year that are presently in a FRCC 2 to FRCC 1 using mechanical treatments.
- c. Maintain safety zones to ensure human safety in the Dripping Springs Natural Area.

#### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for resource benefit – This is not an appropriate strategy for this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire-There has been a program to maintain safety zones around the Dripping Springs trail since 1997. Approximately 25-40 acres have been prescribed burned in the past to reduce flammable brush and provide a safe area for visitors in the event of an uncontrolled wildfire in the canyon area. This program will continue with maintenance burning every 1-5 years. There is a need for pile burning after mechanical treatments around the structures and picnic areas to reduce fuel loadings.
- c. Non-fire fuels treatments –
  1. Mechanical-Brush removal using chainsaws and hand tools in the FMU to reduce the fire hazard around man-made structures. This may be followed by pile burning and/or chipping where feasible.
  2. Chemical – may be considered as needed by a site specific plan.
- d. Post fire rehabilitation and/or actions needed for restoration –All wildland fires > 50 acres in size will receive reseeded of native grasses.

e. **Suppression/Tactics**- The goal is to suppress all fires and keep them < 5 acres in size 95% of the time. Direct attack if small or indirect attack using fire with engine support from BLM, Talavera FD, Organ VFD and WSMR.

## **TALAVERA SUBDIVISION**

Category/Number: **A-8**

**1. Location** – The FMU is located approximately 8 miles east of Las Cruces, NM in the foothills leading up to the Organ Mountains. The mean elevation of the unit is approximately 5000 feet. The unit is 5501 acres in size.

**2. Characteristics**-The FMU contains mostly private land with several dozen homes and more being added all the time. Most of the properties use native vegetation for landscaping and many are situated to take advantage of the views. As the subdivision grows into the foothills of the Organ Mountains, the chance for impacts from wildland fires increases. The BLM manages the land surrounding the subdivision on three sides as wilderness (See Organ Mountains WSA/ACEC FMU Number D-3).

Vegetation on the alluvial plains is composed mainly of creosote, mixed desert grasses, mesquite and cactus. The soils in the area are of different types depending on location. The main classification of soils is aridisols. The most common soil found in the FMU is of a single grained, very coarse sand structure type.

Cultural and recreation resources are abundant in the area. The BLM manages a recreation site near the FMU. Recreation usage in the FMU is a concern, there are over 12 miles of maintained hiking, and biking and general recreation trails in the area. With the close proximity of this trail system to Las Cruces, visitor usage is quite high.

This area supports a high number of species of birds, mammals and reptiles. The area also supports cattle grazing.

**3. Wildland fire history** -From 1984-present, there have been no human and no natural fires reported in this FMU.

**4. Fire regime/Condition Class** –Currently the overall condition class of the FMU is 2. The current condition class is due to the encroachment of creosote and mesquite in what are historically grass sites. The degradation is attributed to grazing and fire exclusion.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints** - The private dwellings, cultural, recreation and wildlife resources within and near the FMU are at risk from wildfires.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are areas within the FMU that have human habitation.

## **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect human, cultural and natural resources in the area by suppressing all fires.
- b. Restore 10 acres/year to a FRCC 1 using mechanical treatments.

## **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– This is not an appropriate strategy for this FMU
- b. Prescribed Fire-There is the possibility of pile burning after mechanical treatments to reduce fuel loadings.
- c. Non-fire fuels treatments –
  1. Mechanical- Brush removal using chainsaws and hand tools in the FMU to reduce the fire hazard. This may be followed by pile burning and/or chipping where feasible. 10 acre/year of hazard fuel reduction is the goal in this FMU.
  2. Chemical – may be considered as needed by a site specific plan.
- d. Post fire rehabilitation and/or actions needed for restoration –It is not anticipated that future fires, either natural or human caused will require rehabilitation.
- e. Suppression/Tactics- The goal is to keep all fires < 5 acres 95% of the time. BLM engines, Talavera VFD and Las Cruces City units should respond to all wildfires.

## **LAKE VALLEY**

### **Category/Number-A-9**

**1. Location** – The unit is approximately 25 miles west northwest of Hatch, New Mexico. The elevation of the unit is approximately 5300 feet. The unit consists of a total of 316 acres.

**2. Characteristics-** Cultural and recreation resources are abundant in the area. Lake Valley is a listed community on the national historic ghost town register. There are many established hiking and walking trails in the area. The area supports a high number of visitors throughout the year. The area of Lake Valley is under the care of the BLM, and has numerous historic structures. The BLM has two full time hosts that offer guided tours of the community of Lake Valley.

Vegetation within the unit is composed mainly of creosote, mixed desert grasses, mesquite and cactus.

Gravelly soils, sandy and loamy soils and rock outcrop soils are common types found in the FMU. The most common soil is a moderately well drained aridisol.

**3. Wildland fire history** -From 1202 database records there have been no recorded fires of any kind in the FMU.

**4. Fire regime/Condition Class** –. Currently the FRCC is 2 due to the decline of the overall grass component and the increase of mesquite in the vegetation makeup. This is the result of grazing and human disturbance activities over the last 100 years.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints** - The cultural, historic, recreation, wildlife and grazing resources are at risk from wildland fire.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk.

**7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect life and property in the area by suppressing all fires.
- b. Move the areas that are presently in a FRCC 2 to FRCC 1 using mechanical treatments. Optimally, 5 acres/year would be treated over a 10 year period.

**8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– This is not an appropriate strategy for this FMU
- b. Prescribed Fire-There are opportunities for pile burning in the shrub dominated areas to reduce the hazardous fuel load.
- c. Non-fire fuels treatments –
  1. Mechanical- Brush removal using chainsaws and hand tools in the FMU to reduce the fire hazard, followed by pile burning and/or chipping where feasible.
  2. Chemical – May be considered as needed by a site specific plan.
- d. Post fire rehabilitation and/or actions needed for restoration –Future fires, either natural or human caused will not require rehabilitation in this FMU.
- e. Suppression/Tactics- The goal is to contain all fires at < 5 acres in size 95% of the time using direct suppression methods with engines from the BLM and nearby VFDs from Hillsboro and Cooke’s Peak.

**PINOS ALTOS**

Category/Number: **A-10**

**1. Location** – The unit is approximately 10 miles northeast of Silver City, New Mexico, in the Pinos Altos Range. The mean elevation of the unit is approximately 7400 feet. The unit consists of a total of 1,789 acres of BLM land and 100 acres of private lands.

**2. Characteristics**-Pinos Altos is an historic mining town that attracts thousands of visitors annually. There are numerous full-time and seasonal residents who own developed, commercial and private properties in the area. Due to the human habitation in the FMU, the BLM has focused a major fuel reduction effort in the area with a fuel break surrounding the town and other thinning projects beyond the fuel break.

Vegetation within the FMU is diverse and is composed mainly of ponderosa pine, pinyon pine, and juniper, several species of oak, mixed desert grasses, mountain mahogany, manzanita and cactus.

The soils in the area are of different types depending on location in the FMU. Gravelly, sandy and loamy soils along with rock outcrop soils are common types found in the FMU. The most

common soil is a moderately well drained soil that formed by aeolian, alluvium and colluvium deposits on the mountains.

Cultural and recreation resources are abundant in the area. Recreation usage in the FMU is a major concern. There are many established hiking and biking trails in the area. The area supports a high number of visitors throughout the year with the surrounding area having numerous developed and undeveloped privately owned properties. Pinos Altos is a listed community on the ghost town register. There are many historical buildings and sites in the area.

**3. Wildland fire history** – From 1202 database, there has been one human caused fire for 5 acres and one natural caused fire for < 1 acre since 1984.

**4. Fire regime/Condition Class** – The FMU is FRCC 2 with some FRCC 3. Much of the FMU was logged and mined around the turn of the last century. The resultant vegetation is characterized as chaparral with many impenetrable stands of even-aged brush. The ponderosa pine stands in the FMU are overstocked and show the effects of competition for sunlight, water and nutrients.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints** - The cultural, recreation, and wildlife resources along with the human occupied dwellings are at risk from wildfire.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are areas adjacent to and within the FMU that have both fulltime and intermittent human habitation. Pinos Altos is listed as one of the twenty most at-risk communities from wildfire in the State of New Mexico.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect life and property in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing all wildland fires in the FMU.
- b. Protect cultural, natural and recreation resources in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing all wildland fires.
- c. Change approximately 50% of the FMU (800 acres) from FRCC 2 to FRCC 1 using a combination of pile burning and mechanical treatments.

### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– This is not an appropriate strategy for this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire-There are opportunities for pile burning in the ponderosa pine, pinyon pine, juniper, and shrub dominated areas to reduce the hazardous fuel load. There is an ongoing project that has thinned and piled 200 acres of brush around the community of Pinos Altos.
- c. Non-fire fuels treatments
  1. Mechanical- Brush removal using chainsaws and hand tools in the FMU to reduce the fire hazard. This is to be followed by pile burning and/or chipping where feasible. There is an ongoing project in the Pinos Altos area to reduce hazard fuels by both the BLM and the USFS. Approximately 100 acres/year are being treated with the same number of acres per year planned for 10 years.
  2. Chemical – may be considered as needed by a site specific plan.

- d. Post fire rehabilitation and/or actions needed for restoration – There has been no rehabilitation of previous fires in this area. On burned areas > 5 acres with slopes > 20%, erosion control structures and fencing to control livestock use would be constructed.
- e. Suppression/Tactics- The USFS Gila NF has initial attack responsibility for this FMU. The goal is to keep all fires < 5 acres in size 95% of the time.

## **GILA LOWER AND MIDDLE BOX**

Category/Number: **A-11**

**1. Location** -The Gila Lower and Middle Box is located in northwestern Hidalgo County, approximately 30 miles north of Lordsburg, New Mexico. The area encompasses:

BLM	15,626 acres
Private	12,958 acres
State	<u>1,750 acres</u>
Total	30,334 acres

**2. Characteristics**-The Gila River is the largest free flowing river in the Southwest. The Gila Lower Box is characterized by cliffs and steep canyon sides rising above a significant riparian area. The riparian area itself contains stands of Arizona sycamore, Fremont cottonweed, willows and other riparian vegetation. Several state listed and federal candidate animal species occur within the area. The Gila Lower Box is one of the few places in New Mexico where the Southwestern willow flycatcher occurs. Along the riparian area, there is about 1 and 1/4 linear miles of currently occupied southwestern willow flycatcher habitat and 8 miles of current, potential habitat that is unoccupied. In addition, two federally threatened fishes, the loach minnow and the spikedace are known to be present in the Gila River. The Gila Lower Box is designated as a watchable wildlife area and has no developed recreation sites.

The Gila Middle Box area is characterized by a narrow, rugged canyon with steep walls. The canyon provides habitat for numerous special status species, including two federally endangered fish, the loach minnow and the spike dace. Although the Southwestern willow flycatcher historically occurred along portions of the Gila River, the Gila Middle Box area does not include suitable habitat for the species.

Common recreational uses for both areas include wildlife viewing, camping, fishing, picnicking, hunting, floating, and swimming.

Many archaeological sites are also known to exist within both the Lower and Middle Box boundaries of the Gila River. The types of prehistoric sites include quarries, petroglyphs, rock shelters, lithic scatters, and structures.

Both the Gila Lower and Middle Box are closed to OHV and are designated as VRM class II.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-There has been no recorded fires within the FMU since 1984.

**4. Fire regime/condition class - FRCC 1(100% of the FMU).**

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints-**The Gila River Lower Box is the largest and most significant riparian area on BLM land within the Las Cruces District Office area. It has been recognized as needing special management protection to maintain the riparian area (BLM 1993a Mimbres RMP). Management goals for the riparian area are to protect, improve, and enhance riparian habitat for the southwestern willow flycatcher. As described earlier, significant cultural resources are known to occur within the Gila Box especially in the riparian areas associated with the Gila River.

**6. Communities at Risk –** There are no communities at risk within the FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives**

a. Protect and maintain the riparian areas by suppressing all wildland fires in the FMU.

**8. Fire Management Strategies**

a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– There are no plans for wildland fire use within this FMU.

b. Prescribed Fire – Five acres/year of pile burning in the riparian areas to help control exotic plant species and to lessen the fuel loading.

c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments

Mechanical-Used in conjunction with prescribed fire, 5 acres of thinning and hand piling to lessen severe fire threat.

Chemical-none planned

Biological-none planned

d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration – Seeding of native grasses, shrubs and trees after wildfires > 1 acre in the riparian areas to help control non-native plant invasions.

e. Suppression/Tactics-Rapid response using the full array of firefighting resources to achieve containment within the first burning period with the goal of containing all fires < 5 acres in size 95 % of the time. BLM engines from LCDO and VFD engines from Lordsburg, Gila/Neblett and Tyrone/Red Rock should respond. Aerial retardants will not be used in the riparian areas.

**SACRAMENTO ESCARPMENT WSA/ACEC**

Category/Number: **B-1**

**1. Location –** This unit comprises 6,947 total acres and is located approximately 4 miles south southeast of Alamogordo, NM. Its eastern boundary is the Lincoln NF boundary.

**2. Characteristics** –The Sacramento Escarpment ACEC was created by the BLM to protect the scenic quality of the area and to protect several rare plant and animal species which reside here. In particular, the Sacramento prickly poppy and the Villard’s pincushion cactus are found only in this area.

Vegetation is composed primarily of creosote, mesquite, and saltbush mixed with a variety of cacti, agave, yucca and desert grasses in the lower elevations. On the steep slopes and mesa tops the dominant vegetation is grasses intermixed with ocotillo, yucca, scrub oak, pinyon and juniper. In the canyon bottoms there is a variety of riparian vegetation including cottonwood, ash, willow, grape and ferns.

Topography of the area consists of steep limestone slopes rising into mesa tops, cut by deep canyons ending in broad alluvial fans upon the Tularosa basin.

The Oliver Lee State Park falls partially within the FMU and is accessed from US 54 by heading east on Dog Canyon Road.

Culturally significant resources have been identified in the FMU and are diverse and extensive. Most are related to prehistoric cultures and include pueblo sites and artifact scatters. The FMU falls within Visual Class 1 (VRM 1) guidelines which states to maintain a landscape setting that appears unaltered by man.

Management of wildlife and special status species will continue to be handled under guidance in the White Sands RMP (page 40) for big game habitat management and in compliance with special status species law and policy.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-According to 1202 database, from 1984-present there have been no reported fires in the area.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-The FRCC is 2 due to heavy grazing by cattle and sheep over many years.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**-There are range improvements and hiking trails and two-track roads located in the canyon bottoms. Dispersed recreation use is a consideration. The observatory cluster above this FMU and to the east, at Sunspot, NM could be threatened if a wildfire came out of the FMU and headed east.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk within the FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect range resources (pipelines, fences, corrals) and human visitors in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing wildland fires.
- b. Protect riparian areas from severe wildfire effects through fire suppression.
- c. Move ecosystems that are in FRCC 2 to FRCC 1 using prescribed fire to accomplish the objective. Optimally, 100 acres/year for 10 years would be broadcast burned.

## 8. Fire Management Strategies

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit—This is not an appropriate management strategy for this FMU due to the fact the FMU shares approximately 10 miles of border with the Lincoln NF and their priority for fire management in the area is fire suppression.
- b. Prescribed Fire – There are opportunities for prescribed fires in the riparian areas to reduce non-native plant species and there is the possibility of broadcast burning in small blocks to reduce brush and P-J encroachments on the benches and mesa tops of the FMU.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments –
  - Mechanical- No mechanical disturbances are allowed within WSAs
  - Chemical-No opportunity due to maintaining VRM 1.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration – Reseeding of native grasses, erosion control devices and fencing to control livestock use in the FMU will be used in the event of a wildfire that burns over 5 acres.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-Initial attack responsibility for the FMU falls with the State of New Mexico Forestry Division, BLM and the Lincoln National Forest. The appropriate management response to wildland fire in the FMU is to aggressively attack all fires with the goal of containment of all fires at < 5 acres 95% of the time.

## LORDSBURG, DEMING, SILVER CITY–TRI COUNTY

Category/Number: **B-2**

**1. Location** – This FMU is largely state-owned lands and private lands with a sprinkling of scattered BLM parcels intermixed. Ownership acreages are as follows:

BLM	173,329 acres
State	754,546 acres
State Park	795 acres
Private	<u>1,444,122 acres</u>
Total	2,372,792 acres

**2. Characteristics** – The FMU is characterized by Chihuahuan desert grasslands at elevations of 3,800 to 5,000 feet with mountain areas up to 8,000 feet. Gently sloping plains are broken by abruptly rising desert mountain islands. The western portions of the FMU are characterized by elevations of 5,000 to 6,500 feet and are associated with general foothill topography with numerous canyons and dry washes adjacent to mountains.

Vegetation in the FMU varies greatly in its diversity, production, and potential due to differences in climate, elevation, soils and topography. The area exhibits influences from the Chihuahuan Deserts, Southern Rocky Mountains, and the Mogollon Plateau.

Major highways through the FMU are I-10, US 180 and US 70.

The RMP emphasizes the maintenance of the Class II air quality of the area. The RMP also

states BLM – initiated activities will be designed to have minimal effect on air quality and retain the Class II standard.

The RMP states the primary emphasis will be on preserving water quality through the development of best management practices.

Soils range from deep, sandy to very shallow, loams on the uplands. They are generally well-drained, permeability is typically moderate, and runoff is medium to rapid. The hazard of water erosion can be moderate to high, and wind erosion is moderate.

The FMU supports a wide range of wildlife representative of the Chihuahuan Desert. A list of potential species and their associated habitats can be found in the Mimbres RMP.

Several distinct cultural groups are known to have inhabited the FMU during the prehistoric period. Isolated projectile points have been found within the region and have been assigned to the Paleo-Indian cultures. The second major prehistoric cultural tradition in the region has been referred to as the Archaic or Desert Archaic. Archaic period “lithic scatter” sites are known to occur within the FMU, and are primarily identified through various projectile point styles. The third major southwestern cultural group has been identified as the Mogollon. Within this time period, several distinct changes occurred and are characterized as the Early Pithouse Period, the Late Pithouse Period, and the Pueblo Period.

**3. Wildland Fire History-**According to the 1202 database, from 1984-2003, there have been 37 fire occurrences. 22 fires were natural caused and 15 were man-caused for a total of 11,674 acres. Dominant fuel model in the FMU is Fuel Model 1, short grass. Most large fire occurrences are the result of wind driven ignitions, which can burn for great distances, but usually go out when the wind stops.

**4. Fire regime/condition class-** Fire Regime Condition Class for this FMU is a mixture of Class 1 (50% of the FMU), 2(30% of the FMU) and 3(20% of the FMU). Much of the departure from normal is attributed to grazing practices and the resultant loss of grass cover and the increase in non-native species and native woody vegetation.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints-**Values at risk are the near-by communities of Pinos Altos and Silver City which are listed on the 20 Communities Most at Risk from Wildfire in New Mexico, numerous villages, ranches and homes and cultural sites.

**6. Communities at Risk –** The communities of Pinos Altos and Silver City are listed in the Federal Register as Communities at Risk.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect private property and improvements from fires through fire suppression.
- b. Change areas in FRCC 2 to FRCC 1 by working with landowners and other agencies to collaborate on chemical/prescribed fire project implementation

### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– There are no plans for wildland fire use in this FMU at this time.
- b. Prescribed Fire – There are no plans for prescribed at this time due to the fragmented nature of the BLM lands within the FMU.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments –none planned
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration – Fires within this FMU would be allowed to re-vegetate naturally. Some post-fire erosion control devices would likely be used on a case-by-case basis, such as fencing to control grazing.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-There are several VFDs located inside this large FMU. Traditionally all fires have been suppressed . The BLM engines from LCDO will respond when notified by SDC. The goal is to contain all fires at < 10 acres 95% of the time.

## HILLSBORO

Category/Number: **B-3**

**1. Location** – Approximately fifteen miles west of Interstate 25 and 30 miles south of Truth or Consequences on NM Highway 152.

BLM	842 acres
<u>Private</u>	<u>1891 acres</u>
Total	2733 acres

**2. Characteristics** – The historic, mining community of Hillsboro sits in a broad canyon, surrounded by rolling hills. Immediately west of Hillsboro lies the Black Range District of the Gila NF. Percha Creek is an intermittent stream which issues from the Black Range and courses through the middle of the FMU.

Historically, mining activities have taken place in the uplands and riparian areas around Hillsboro. Currently, there are no active mining operations. Several archaeological sites are noted on cultural resource maps.

Numerous vegetation types occur within the area. Some of the major types are grass species such as Sideoats grama, Blue grama, Arizona Cottontop and species of muhly. At higher elevation are pinyon and juniper. Among the understory shrubs are oak, sacahuista, and skunkbush. Riparian areas consist of salt cedar, cottonwood, willow, Western elder and ash species.

The only major highway is New Mexico 152. Power lines in utility corridors supply electricity to the village of Hillsboro and nearby ranches.

The RMP emphasizes the maintenance of the Class II air quality of the area.

The Mimbres RMP states the LCFO will participate with the State and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in water quality management to ensure that management practices comply with

State water quality standards.

The FMU provides diverse habitats for approximately 29 animal species that may occur within the area. Also 7 special status species of plants are known to occur within its boundaries.

**3. Wildland Fire History-** According to 1202 database, there have been no recorded BLM fires around the community of Hillsboro.

**4. Fire regime/condition class** – Currently the entire FMU is FRCC 2 due to human disturbance activities, fire exclusion and grazing practices.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints** -The human and cultural resources within the FMU are at risk from wildfire.

**6. Communities at Risk** – The community of Hillsboro is at risk from wildfire.

**7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect human habitation from wildfire by suppressing all fires in the FMU.
- b. Move the current FRCC 2 lands through prescribed fire treatments to FRCC 1.
- c. Protect riparian areas, aquatic resources, cultural sites, and Special Status species from suppression activities.

**8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit–Wildland fire use is not planned for this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire –Treat 30-50 acres/year by broadcast burning in those areas that have juniper and brush encroachment.
- c. Non-fire Fuel Treatments .
  - Mechanical-10 acres/year to be thinned using chainsaws and chipper to reduce fuels around interface areas
  - Chemical-none planned
  - Biological-none planned
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration –Any fires in riparian areas would be seeded with a mixture of native grasses and tree species. Fires > 5 acres would have erosion barriers placed on slopes > 20%.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-The Hillsboro VFD will respond to all fires in the FMU. The BLM and USFS will provide back-up suppression forces. The goal is to contain all fires at < 5 acres in size 95% of the time.

**RIO GRANDE CORRIDOR**

Category/Number: **B-4**

**1. Location** –This FMU is located along the Rio Grande River south of the community of Truth or Consequences and north and west of the New Mexico/Texas border.

BLM	115,520 acres
BOR	9,238 acres
DOD	2,958 acres
Private	233,120 acres
<u>State</u>	<u>34,101 acres</u>
Total	394,937 acres

**2. Characteristics-** This valley/border zone is located in the valley of the Rio Grande River between Truth or Consequences and Anthony, New Mexico and includes the area known as the Mesilla Valley. The FMU is characterized by deposits and surfaces formed by the river and its associated tributaries. Between the mountains and the valley exists a number of intermountain basins that have been affected by tributary and slope processes on both sides of the Rio Grande.

Plants associated with riparian areas such as cottonwood, willows, and cattails are found only as isolated, small pockets along the river corridor. The entire area of valley bottomlands has been converted into croplands and urban areas. Irrigation for crops is the biggest use of Rio Grande water, accounting for more than 80 percent of all the water taken from the river. There are small pockets of Salt Cedar growing along the Rio Grande River and along the ditch systems. The FMU contains many relic areas of Chihuahuan desert grasslands and also contains several thousand acres of grasslands that have converted to mesquite dunes and creosote shrub lands.

The Mimbres RMP states that NM-LCD will participate with the State and Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in water quality management to ensure that management practices comply with State water quality standards.

Soils for this FMU are deep, nearly level, well drained soils that formed in alluvium, on floodplains and stream terraces of the Rio Grande and its tributaries. Elevation ranges from 3,700 to 4,120 feet. Slopes are 0 -10 percent. Typically the layers are a clay loam

The FMU supports a wide range of wildlife dependent on the riparian ecosystem. A list of potential species and their associated habitats can be found in the Mimbres RMP.

Several distinct cultural groups are known to have inhabited the region during the prehistoric period. Isolated projectile points have been found within the region and have been assigned to the Paleo-Indian culture.

**3. Wildland Fire History-**From the 1202 database there have been 22 wildfires. There were 2 lightning fires for 40 acres and 20 human-caused fires for 307 acres.

**4. Fire regime/condition class-**Approximately 80 percent of the FMU is FRCC 2 due to disturbance by man and cattle grazing. The other 20 percent is FRCC 3 and has been altered to the point that the topsoil is gone and few plants, other than mesquite, creosote and cactus, are able to survive.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints-**There are individual homes and structures located in canyon bottoms and in the main river valley that could be at risk from wildfire.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk.

**7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect private property and improvements, riparian areas, cultural sites, and T & E habitat from the effects of wildland fire by suppressing all fires.
- b. Begin the process of changing ecosystem components from FRCC 2 and 3 back to a more normal fire regime by using mechanical and chemical treatments.

**8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfires for Resource Benefit– There are no plans for wildland fire use within this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire – There are no plans for prescribed fire within this FMU due to the fact that the fuel continuity is non-existent in most areas.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments
  - Mechanical-20 acres/year of salt cedar removal
  - Chemical-follow-up treatment after mechanical removal of salt cedar with chemicals to prevent stump regrowth. Optimally, about 200 acres/year will be treated.
  - Biological-none planned at this time
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation– Reseed all burned areas with a mixture of native grasses and tree/shrub species to stabilize soils and inhibit non-native plant growth following wildfire in riparian areas.
- e. Suppression/Tactics- The priority is to contain all fires < 5 acres 95% of the time. The majority of the wildfires in this FMU are in salt cedar thickets that are not continuous. The numerous VFDs located in the valley will respond by dispatch from the Mesilla Valley Regional Dispatch Authority. BLM engines will respond upon request.

**CHAPARRAL COMMUNITY**

Category/Number: **B-5**

**1. Location** – Chaparral New Mexico is located 22 miles southeast of Las Cruces, New Mexico and just north of the Texas border near the city of El Paso, TX.

BLM	14,847 acres
Private	20,978 acres
DOD	7 acres
State	9,109 acres
Total	44,941 acres

**2. Characteristics** –The community of Chaparral has grown as an unincorporated village on the outskirts of El Paso, TX. There is a mixture of permanent dwellings and trailers on mostly

unpaved streets with large areas of desert mixed throughout the community.

The topography is a mixture of rolling upland hills and sand dune basins.

The area is generally a creosote shrub site. The Franklin Mountains portion of the FMU consists of mixed desert shrub uplands and some of the lower country contains mesquite sand dunes. Some of the plant species found in the area include: mesquite, creosote, catclaw, tarbush, fluff grass, bush muhly, mesa dropseed, mariola, range ratany, agave, black grama, sideoats grama, burrograss and broom snakeweed.

The RMP emphasizes the maintenance of the Class II air quality.

Soils typical of the area are deep, well drained, level to gently undulating that formed in the fine silty sediment that derived from igneous material. Permeability is moderately slow, runoff is medium, and erosion hazard is moderate.

Initial analysis of the FMU shows that there is potential habitat for the Sneed's pincushion cactus.

Many archeological surveys have been conducted within the area and sites have been plotted on cultural resource base maps.

**3. Wildland Fire History:** From 1984-2003, there have been two recent recorded human-caused fires on BLM lands around the community of Chaparral for a total of 65 acres.

**4. Fire regime/condition class** –Fifty percent of the FMU is FRCC 2 and 50 percent is FRCC 3. This departure from normal is due to cattle grazing for many years and the impacts of being near the large metropolitan area of El Paso, TX. There are large areas that contain non-native plants such as salt cedar and tumbleweed.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints:** Values at risk would be the community of Chaparral and cultural sites.

**6. Communities at Risk** –Parts of the community of Chaparral are at risk from wildfire due to the buildup of tumbleweeds and other non-native plants.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect cultural resources and the community of Chaparral from the effects of fire by suppressing all fires.
- b. Move ecosystems that are in FRCC 2 and 3 to FRCC 1 using a combination of prescribed fire and mechanical treatments to accomplish the objective.

### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– There are no plans for wildfire use within this FMU
- b. Prescribed Fire –Broadcast burn 100 acres/year in small blocks to reduce shrub invasions in desert grassland systems.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments –  
Mechanical-Treat 10 acres/year to reduce woody species near homes or other man-made improvements.

Chemical-There are no plans to use chemicals in this FMU.

Biological-There are no plans to use biological treatments in this FMU

d. Post Fire Rehabilitation– There has been no rehabilitation of previous fires within this FMU. It is not anticipated that future fires, either natural or human-caused, will require rehabilitation.

e. Fire Suppression/Tactics-South Valley, Ft Bliss and El Paso city fire units respond to all fires in the area. BLM will respond upon request. Suppress all fires at < 5 acres 95% of the time.

## WINSTON/LADDER RANCH

Category/Number: **B-6**

**1. Location** – The Winston/Ladder Ranch FMU is located in Sierra County and borders the Black Range of the Gila National Forest on its west side, with a small area north of State Highway 52 and then east to within 3 miles of Interstate 25 and south near State Highway 152.

BLM	19,464 acres
State –	27,492 acres
<u>Private –</u>	<u>169,680 acres</u>
Total	216,636 acres

**2. Characteristics** - The FMU is biologically diverse with a variety of federally and/or state listed threatened and endangered species. Federally listed species that occur within the ranch include the Bald Eagle and the common black hawk.

Topography consists of mountain, uplands, arroyos and riparian areas.

The principal vegetation types are Pinyon-Juniper, desert grasslands, and mixed desert shrub.

Riparian areas consist of Cottonwood, with occasional species of salt cedar, willow, Arizona sycamore, Western box elder, and ash species.

State Highway 52 connects east within 3 miles of Interstate 25. Power lines in utility corridors supply electricity to the ranch.

The RMP emphasizes the maintenance of the Class II air quality of the area.

There are numerous soil types that occur within the ranch boundary. The RMP states that soils will be managed to maintain productivity and minimize erosion and stabilize the resources.

Cultural sites vary from the Mimbres civilization to historical ranch structures.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-According to 1202 database records, from 1984-2003, there have been 2 lightning fires reported in the area totaling 100 acres.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-The FMU breaks down into FRCC 1 25% of the total area and FRCC 2 75% of the area. The departure from normal is due, primarily to a long history of cattle

grazing in the area and is characterized by large areas of broom snakeweed and creosote shrub encroachment.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints-** Due to the size of this privately held ranch, the Ladder Ranch has its own specific FMP, written in 1999. It is very specific as to values at risk and constraints to firefighting resources.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk within the FMU.

## **7. Fire Management Objectives**

The 1999 Ladder Ranch Fire Management Plan Specific Management objectives include:

1. Protecting personnel, existing buildings, equipment, and livestock.
2. Protecting natural resources from extreme and detrimental fires particularly in the existing riparian areas found within the ranch.
3. Improvement of native vegetation communities through the use of fire as a means of shrub invasion control, invasive species control and enhancement of grasslands.
4. Protecting and enhancing the watersheds, particularly those feeding the riparian areas.

## **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfires for Resource Benefit-Burn Units are areas identified in the Ladder Ranch fire management plan as areas with defensible perimeters in which to contain fires. The plan states that it is left to the Resource Management advisor and the Incident Commander as to the size of the maximum allowable perimeter of the fire, but the burn units give a management network in which to work. The Ladder Ranch Fire Management Plan takes into account the ranch goals and objectives, state and federal agency legal responsibility and adjacent landowner perspectives.
- b. Prescribed Fire –There are some opportunities for prescribed fire. Current objectives for the use of prescribed in the Ladder Ranch Fire Management Plan is to use prescribed fire for the control of invasive shrubs such as creosote and juniper, and the enhancement of habitat for quail.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments –There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments. These will be looked at on a project level basis.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation– There has been no rehabilitation of previous fires within this FMU. It is not anticipated that future fires, either natural or human-caused, will require rehabilitation.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-The Ladder Ranch will provide initial attack on fires that threaten important vulnerable resources. USFS Black Range units, VFD units from Hillsboro, Las Palomas, Williamsburg and BLM engines will respond to all fires in this FMU. The goal is to suppress all fires during FIL 4,5 and 6 at < 5 acres and confine/contain fires at FIL 1-3 at < 100 acres.

## TULAROSA BASIN/OTERO MESA

Category/Number: C-1

**1. Location** –This very large unit encompasses lands across three counties, including Dona Ana, Sierra and all of Otero County. It is bordered on its east side by the Otero-Eddy-Chavez County line, on its north end by the Otero-Lincoln County line, on the west by the White Sands Missile Range boundary and on the south by the state line of Texas. Land ownership is as follows:

BLM	1,135,296 acres
DOA	2 acres
DOD	1,757,400 acres
USFS	558,694 acres
USFWS	56,775 acres
BIA	459,733 acres
NPS	144,504 acres
Private	470,349 acres
State	331,297 acres
State Park	<u>440 acres</u>
Total	4,914,490 acres

**1. Characteristics** –The lands of the White Sands Missile Range (DOD), White Sands National Monument (NPS), San Andres NWR (USFWS), the Lincoln NF (USFS) and the Mescalero Apache Indian Reservation (BIA) are included in this FMU. These lands are covered by their respective agencies' Fire Management Plans and are excluded from further discussion in this plan and FMU description.

The BLM portion of the FMU is primarily Chihuahuan desert shrub and grassland. Much of the BLM portion of the FMU falls within a transition zone between the pinyon-juniper woodlands of the Sacramento Mountains and the hardpan salt desert bottoms of the Tularosa Basin. The area atop Otero Mesa is a pristine example of a desert grassland ecosystem in FRCC 1 and contains the largest contiguous example of Black Grama desert grassland in the U.S. The terrain drops off to the east and the area transitions into a vast closed basin of tobosa grass and creosote-mesquite shrub known as Crow Flats. The FMU includes the Jarilla Mountains, the Chatfield Hills, Cornudas Mountains and parts of the Sacramento Mountains. Soils range from granite to sandy loam to alkali clays in the basin bottomlands. There are four Areas of Critical Environmental Concern (ACECs) located in this FMU. They are Cornudas Mountain, Alamo Mountain, Wind Mountain and Alkali Lakes. They are designated as such due to their unique cultural, wildlife and topographical features. Detailed descriptions of each can be found in the Otero County ACEC RMPA (August 1997).

Human activities within this FMU include mainly ranching and recreation in the forms of hunting, sightseeing, rock climbing and four-wheeling. There are several ranches scattered throughout the FMU.

Vegetation consists primarily of desert shrubs (vast expanses of mesquite and creosote) with grasslands covering the upper reaches of Otero Mesa and pockets of grasslands in higher elevation areas and in drainage bottoms of the Tularosa Basin. There are pockets of pinyon/juniper woodlands in the highest elevation areas of the Chatfield Hills, Cornudas Mountains and also in the upland areas around and Bent (Cat Mountain and Mountain Lion Peak). The Rio Tularosa and Three Rivers are the major perennial aquatic resources within this FMU. Both streams run into the Tularosa Basin and go underground. Large intermittent drainages flow westward into the Tularosa Basin from the Sacramento Mountains. The eastern part of the FMU is a closed basin with numerous arroyos draining into it from all directions.

The FMU consists of one largely contiguous block of BLM land in the southern half and some broken BLM parcels in the northern part. Primary access is via U.S. 54 which runs through the FMU from north to south. Other major access roads include U.S. 70 and NM 506. The US Army controls access across the McGregor Range portion of the FMU and closes NM 506 during missile firings. The city of Alamogordo lies within the FMU as do the smaller communities of Holloman AFB, Orogrande, Tularosa, La Luz and Bent.

Special status species concerns include the peregrine falcon, ferruginous hawk, northern goshawk, southwestern willow flycatcher, occult little brown bat, loggerhead shrike, Texas horned lizard, Alamo beardtongue, Sacramento prickly poppy and Villard's pincushion cactus.

Cultural resources are prolific throughout the FMU. Many sites of the Mogollon culture have been found in all areas of the FMU. There are numerous petroglyph sites. The Butterfield Trail passes through the southern end of the FMU and there are Stage Stations associated with it in the FMU.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-There have been numerous large fires in this FMU. Almost all have been on Otero Mesa. From the 1202 database for the period 1984-2003 there have been 63 natural-caused fires for 53,394 acres and 34 human-caused fires for 23,586 acres.

Historically, all wildfires in the FMU have been suppressed. The US Forest Service, operating under the Joint Powers Act, has initial attack responsibility. The US Army suppresses all man-caused fires on the McGregor Range portion of the FMU. The BLM maintains fire management responsibilities for natural ignitions (lightning fires) on McGregor Range. Local Volunteer Fire Departments aggressively suppress any fire within their jurisdictions. The BLM's involvement in these areas has been limited to incidents which exceed the local fire departments, the Forest Service or the US Army's capabilities. Much of this FMU (60%) will not sustain large fires due to the fuel continuity and arrangement. Areas that have sustained large fire development in the past are those areas with contiguous grass cover (40% of the FMU). Many of these areas are arroyo bottoms, pinyon-juniper savannas and woodlands, grama grass uplands and tobosa/alkali sacaton grassland basins and are scattered throughout the FMU.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-Much of Otero Mesa remains in FRCC 1. This area and other upland sites accounts for 50% of the FMU being in FRCC 1. Approximately 30% of the FMU is in FRCC 2 and is characterized by grasslands with mesquite and creosote encroachment. 20% of

the FMU is in FRCC 3 and these areas are characterized by mesquite dunes and creosote monocultures.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**-There are scattered ranches and improvements throughout the FMU that merit fire protection. Historical buildings and cultural resources are also at risk.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk according to the Federal Register. There is, however, one community that has been identified by local fire experts as an at-risk community. That is the community of Bent. This small community is surrounded by a pinyon-juniper woodland and steep topography. Under extreme fire behavior conditions, this community could be threatened by wildfire.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Use approved fire treatments to restore and maintain natural resources and move FRCC 3 and 2 lands to FRCC 1.
- b. Establish and maintain a vegetative structure and mosaic within the natural range of variability for southwestern pinyon-juniper woodlands as determined from fire ecology and historical research and prevent unwanted crown fires.
- c. Restore fire as a keystone natural process that encourages native grassland ecosystems.
- d. Reduce established noxious and non-native plant cover.

### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– There is no plan for wildfire use in this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire –. Approximately 40 acres/year of land within the pinyon/juniper woodlands in this FMU should be treated using prescribed fire to reduce P/J seedling recruitment on savanna/grassland areas and to move from FRCC 2 to FRCC 1. Approximately 100 acres/year of grasslands in this FMU should be broadcast burned to reduce the encroachment of woody shrubs and to move FRCC 2 to FRCC 1.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments
  1. Mechanical-Approximately 40 acres/year should be thinned within the pinyon-juniper woodlands primarily by using chain saws and hand piling. This will aid in reducing fire severity and will help to move FRCC 2 lands to FRCC 1.
  2. Chemical-Approximately 2000 acres/year should be treated within the creosote-mesquite shrub lands in this FMU using chemicals. This will enhance desert grasslands abilities to re-establish and move FRCC 3 shrub lands to FRCC 2 and 1.
  3. Biological-There are no plans at this time to use biological controls in this FMU.
- d. Post-Fire Rehabilitation -On fires >50 acres and with slopes > 30% erosion control structures should be put in place. Fires > 200 acres should have the cattle removed for one growing season or temporary fencing put in place to exclude livestock from grazing on burned areas.
- e. Fire Suppression/Tactics-All fires within the FMU will be suppressed. The goal is to limit fires during FIL 1, 2, 3 to 200 acres or less 95 % of the time. During FIL 4,5 and 6 the goal is to keep all fires < 5 acres in size 95% of the time.

## FRANKLIN MOUNTAINS ACEC

Category/Number C-2

**1. Location** – This FMU is located in southern Dona Ana County and is designated as an ACEC by the Mimbres RMP. The FMU contains 17,979 acres of BLM lands. It is bounded on its southern end by the Texas-New Mexico border, on the east by the Chaparral FMU and the White Sands Missile Range, on the north by the Organ Mountains WSA/ACEC and on the west by the Rio Grande Corridor FMU.

**2. Characteristics**-The Franklin Mountains ACEC is designated as such because of the diverse limestone and the unique cactus communities found here. There are numerous sensitive plant species found within the FMU. These include the Night-Blooming cereus, Sneed's pincushion cactus, Vasey's bitterweed, Visnagita and the Sand prickly pear cactus. Animal species of concern include the Ferruginous hawk and the Texas horned lizard.

This FMU is dominated by the Franklin Mountain range which is a fault block range characterized by rocky, limestone soils, steep slopes and broad alluvial fans spreading out on the desert floor at the edges of this FMU.

Vegetation is characteristic of the Chihuahuan Desert with large patches of creosote on the desert bajadas, interspersed with desert grasslands where the soil conditions are favorable. The arroyos and washes contain apache plume, desert willow and alkali sacaton. The slopes and ridges of the mountains contain numerous species of agave and cacti with catclaw, mesquite and desert grasses intermixed.

Human activities within the FMU include ranching and recreation, mainly in the forms of hiking, rock climbing, hunting and four-wheeling.

There is some evidence of Mogollon culture in some small caves located near Bishop's Cap. There are also scattered lithic sites within the FMU.

**3. Wildland Fire History**- There have been two lightning fires and one man-caused fire in this FMU during the period 1984-2003. The largest fire was 10 acres.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-The mountainsides are FRCC 1 (50% of the FMU), the surrounding desert lands are FRCC 2 (50% of FMU). The departure from normal is attributed to years of cattle grazing and effects of drought.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**-The rare plant species found in the FMU are at risk from wildfires.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

## 7. Fire Management Objectives

- a. Protect range resources (pipelines, fences, corrals) in the area from the effects of fire by suppressing all fires.
- b. Move ecosystems that are in FRCC 2 to FRCC 1 using chemical treatments to accomplish the objective.

## 8. Fire Management Strategies

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– There are no plans to allow wildfire use within this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire –There is little opportunity for prescribed fire in this FMU due to the scarcity and nature of the fuel.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments –
  - Mechanical-none planned
  - Chemical-200 acres/year of the bajada areas exhibiting closed stands of creosote would benefit from chemical treatments to enhance native grassland restoration.
  - Biological-none planned
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration – None needed
- e. Suppression/Tactics- The BLM will respond with engines when dispatched. All wildfires will be suppressed with the goal of containing all fires at 5 acres or less 95% of the time.

## RIO GRANDE VALLEY UPLANDS

Category/Number: C-3

**1. Location** – This very large unit is located in a north-south swath down the central portion of the Las Cruces District on both sides of the Rio Grande. It is bordered on the east by the White Sands Missile Range and on the north by the Socorro Field Office boundary. It includes the Armendaris Ranch and surrounds the Ladder Ranch and extends westward to the Gila National Forest. It takes in the less populated areas west of the Rio Grande, surrounding the Cooke’s Range WSA. It extends south and contains the western edge of the mainly contiguous BLM lands to the Mexican border. On its south side, it is bounded by the international border with Mexico. Acreages are as follows:

BLM	1,721,021
BOR	28,193
DOA	109,462
DOD	1,231
USFS	18,865
Private	633,438
State	<u>563,675</u>
Total	3,075,885

**2. Characteristics** – This FMU consists of the broad upland terraces and intermountain basins both east and west of the Rio Grande. It includes the Caballo Mountains, Dona Ana Mountains, Cooke's Range, the north end of the Cuchillo Range, parts of the Las Uvas, San Andres,

Robledos and Mimbres mountain ranges, as well as numerous hills, bluffs, and mesas separated by wide expanses of alluvial fans and terraces. Soils are sands and residual volcanic soils. Use within this FMU includes livestock grazing and recreational use in the form of birding, sightseeing, camping, four wheeling and big game and upland bird hunting. Grazing allotments to the west of the White Sands Missile Range and east of the town of Engle on the shoulders of the San Andres Mountains are susceptible to burns from missile firings from White Sands Missile Range.

Vegetation consists primarily of desert shrublands (vast expanses of mesquite, creosote and bare ground), with grasslands surrounding the Cooke's Range WSA and pockets of grasslands in higher elevation areas and in drainage bottoms. There are pockets of pinyon/juniper woodlands in the highest elevation areas of the Caballo and Cuchillo Mountains and also in the upland areas east of Engle. The Rio Grande is the major perennial aquatic resource bisecting this FMU; the FMU surrounds the Rio Grande as far south as the midpoint of Caballo Reservoir. Large intermittent tributary drainages flow eastward into the Rio Grande from the western uplands.

The FMU consists of large blocks of BLM lands interspersed with state sections and smaller blocks of state and private lands. Aside from the area surrounding Truth or Consequences and the Armendaris Ranch, private lands are clustered on the west end of the unit adjacent to the Gila National Forest. Primary access is via I-25 and I-10, which traverse the FMU respectively from north to south and east to west. Major state roads providing access through the FMU include NM 142, 52, 152, 26, 27, and 9. The largest blocks of BLM land, however, are accessible only by county roads and smaller two-track roads.

Air and water quality within the FMU meet national standards.

Special status species concerns include primarily raptor species in this FMU. These species are the Common black hawk, Ferruginous hawk, Peregrine falcon and the Golden eagle.

Cultural/historical resources include prehistoric Mogollon sites scattered throughout the FMU. Evidence of lithic scatter from this group is widespread but is typically found on bluffs or uplands overlooking riparian areas. The Butterfield Trail and the El Camino Real Trail pass through the FMU. There are numerous homestead sites in the FMU. Paleontological resources occur throughout the FMU. Vertebrate fossils and trace-fossils are found in many of the sedimentary rock formations in the FMU.

**3. Wildland Fire History-**From 1202 database from 1984-2003, there have been 46 naturally occurring fires for 25,812 acres burned and there have been 19 human-caused fires for 2,152 acres burned.

Volunteer Fire Departments aggressively suppress any fire. BLM's involvement has been limited to incidents which exceed the local fire departments capabilities. The vast majority of this FMU (90%) will not sustain large fire development due to the fuel continuity. Areas that have sustained large fire development in the past are those areas with contiguous grass cover (10% of the FMU). Many of these areas are arroyo bottoms, pinyon-juniper savannas, tobosa bottoms and alkali sacaton grassland basins and are scattered throughout the FMU.

**4. Fire regime/condition class-** Approximately 50% of the FMU is in FRCC 3, 30% in FRCC 2 and 20% in FRCC 1. This is due to the effects of grazing, human disturbance, fire exclusion and drought.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints-** In-holdings of private property and structures are scattered throughout the FMU and are at low risk from wildfires.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Protect human resources and structures from wildland fire effects by suppressing all fires.
- b. Use prescribed fire treatments to restore and maintain primary natural resources and their processes where applicable in order to move FRCC 3 and 2 to FRCC 1.
- c. Reduce established noxious and non-native plant cover by chemical control.

**8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– There is no plan for wildfire use in this FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire –. Approximately 100 acres/year of land within the pinyon-juniper woodlands in this FMU should be broadcast burned to reduce P/J seedling recruitment on savanna/grassland areas and move from FRCC 3 and 2 to FRCC 1.  
Approximately 100 acres/year of grasslands in this FMU should be broadcast burned to reduce the encroachment of woody shrubs and to move FRCC 3 and 2 to FRCC 1.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments -
  1. Mechanical-Approximately 100 acres/year should be thinned within the pinyon-juniper woodlands primarily by using chain saws and hand piling. This will help to move FRCC 3 and 2 lands to FRCC 1.
  2. Chemical-Approximately 2000 acres/year should be treated within the creosote-mesquite shrublands in this FMU using chemicals. This will enhance desert grasslands abilities to re-establish and move FRCC 3 and 2 shrublands to FRCC1.
  3. Biological-There are no plans at this time to use biological controls in this FMU.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration – Due to the large size of this FMU and the wide variety of ecosystems and topography within it, any rehabilitation or restoration efforts would have to be site-specific and included in the burn plans or treatment plans for each project.
- e. Fire Suppression/Tactics –Use a management response commensurate with firefighter safety and values at risk. The goal is to keep all fires at FIL 1, 2, 3 < 200 acres 95% of the time; at FIL 4 and 5 fires kept at < 5 acres 95 % of the time. BLM and numerous VFDs will respond to all fires as dispatched.

## **BOOTHEEL/GILA**

Category/Number: **C-4**

**1. Location** – This very large unit is located in Grant, Hidalgo and Luna Counties. The FMU is bounded on the west by the New Mexico-Arizona state line, on the south by the U.S.-Mexico border and on the east the FMU shares a boundary with the Lordsburg/Deming/Silver City Tri-County Area FMU (B-8). The Diamond A ranch consists of approximately 600,000 acres right on the Mexico/US border and contains the majority of the Animas Mountain Range. Fire management of the privately-held ranch is described in a separate plan (Bootheel FMP 2003).

Acreages by ownership are as follows:

BLM	1,315,510
USFS	1,301,763
Private	985,084
State	<u>436,926</u>
Total	4,039,283

**2. Characteristics** – Typical of Chihuahuan Desert ecosystems, the vegetation consists primarily of desert shrubs (vast expanses of mesquite, four-wing saltbush and creosote), cactus and agave in the basins and valleys trending into grasslands in higher elevation areas and in drainage bottoms. There are stands of pinyon/juniper woodlands in the higher elevation areas of all the mountain ranges within the FMU. Water resources are scarce within the FMU. The Gila River is the only perennial stream in the area and is primarily contained within the Lower Gila Box FMU. The riparian habitat of the Gila River within this FMU is rich in vegetative diversity and animal life. There are several perennial springs within the FMU and, because of their rarity and uniqueness, are protected from grazing and wildfire. During the rainy season, many of the closed basin areas fill up and form shallow lakes called playas. These can be important stopover resting places for migratory birds.

The area north of the Gila River is a pinyon-juniper savanna. The most southerly portion of the FMU falls within the jurisdiction of the Diamond A Ranch and is covered under the Bootheel FMP 2003 developed by the Animas Foundation and the Malpais Borderlands Group and is consistent with the BLM fire management strategy for this FMU.

Topography of the area consists of rolling, rocky basaltic hills punctuated by steep granitic, fault-block mountain ranges separated by wide valley bottoms or closed basin systems with alkaline soils. Mountain ranges in the FMU include the Pyramid Mountains, Peloncillo Mountains, Animas Mountains, Little Hatchet Mountains, Tres Hermanas Mountains, Cedar Mountains, Burro Mountains and the Mogollon Mountains. Other major features include Lordsburg Mesa, Animas Valley, Playas Valley and Hachita Valley.

Cultural resources are rich and scattered throughout the FMU and consist of rock petroglyphs, Indian pithouses and campsites mostly from the Mogollon culture. There are numerous historical ranches and the ghost towns of Shakespeare and Steins are located near Lordsburg in this FMU.

Use within this FMU includes mainly livestock grazing and recreation in the forms of hunting, sightseeing, camping, rockhounding and four-wheeling. The Continental Divide Trail runs through the southern portion of the FMU in a north/south direction.

Special status species concerns include a whole host of plant and animal species. A complete listing of all can be found in the Mimbres Resource Management Plan, Appendices L-1 and L-2

Access to the FMU is by Interstate 10 which bisects the unit in an east-west direction. Access to the northern part is via US 70 or US 180 and NM 90 and 464. Access to the south is via NM Hwy. 9, 11, 146, 113, 338, 80 and 81.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-There have been 15 large wildfires in the FMU since 1984. According to 1202 data for the period 1984-2003 there were 34 fires for 86,335 acres of which 30 were natural fires for 83,236 acres and 4 were human-caused for 3098 acres. Fire suppression in Grant, Hidalgo and Luna Counties has historically been containment by county VFD resources. Since local Volunteer Fire Departments aggressively suppress any fire, BLM involvement has been limited to incidents which exceed the local fire departments capabilities. The vast majority of this FMU (75%) will not sustain large fire development due to the nature of the fuel continuity and arrangement. Areas that have sustained large fire development in the past are those areas with contiguous grass cover (25% of the FMU). Many of these areas are arroyo bottoms, pinyon-juniper savannas and oak woodlands and tobosa, alkali sacaton grassland basins and are scattered throughout the FMU.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-All of the mountain ranges in the area along with other upland sites accounts for 50% of the FMU being in FRCC 1. Approximately 40% of the FMU is in FRCC 2 characterized by grasslands with mixed shrub land encroachment. 10% is FRCC 3 and these areas are characterized by mesquite dunes and creosote monocultures with burro grass invasions.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**- The cultural sites and private lands with improvements and the small rural communities all merit fire protection.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk within the FMU as identified by the Federal Register. However, the small rural communities of Rodeo and Cloverdale have the fuel components to be threatened by wildfire under extreme circumstances.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Use prescribed fire treatments to restore and maintain primary natural resources and their processes where applicable in order to move FRCC 3 and 2 to FRCC 1.

- b. Establish and maintain a vegetative structure and mosaic within the natural range of variability for southwestern pinyon-juniper woodlands as determined from fire ecology and historical research and prevent unwanted crown fire by the use of prescribed fires.
- c. Reduce established noxious and non-native plant cover by using chemicals.

## **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– There is no plan for wildfire use in this FMU outside of the Diamond A Ranch.
- b. Prescribed Fire – Approximately 100 acres/year within the pinyon-juniper woodlands in this FMU should be treated using prescribed fire to reduce P/J seedling recruitment on savanna/grassland areas and to move from FRCC 3 and 2 to FRCC 1.  
Approximately 1000 acres/year of grasslands in this FMU should be treated using prescribed fire to reduce the encroachment of woody shrubs and to move FRCC 3 and 2 to FRCC 1.
- c. Non-fire Fuel Treatments –
  - 1. Mechanical-Approximately 100 acres/year should be thinned within the pinyon-juniper woodlands primarily by using chain saws and hand piling. This will aid in reducing fire severity and will help to move FRCC 3 and 2 lands to FRCC 1.
  - 2. Chemical-Approximately 2000 acres/year should be treated within the creosote-mesquite shrublands in this FMU using chemicals. This will enhance desert grasslands and move FRCC 3 and 2 lands to FRCC 1.
  - 3. Biological-There are no plans at this time to use biological controls in this FMU.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration – Due to the large size of this FMU and the wide variety of ecosystems and topography within it, any rehabilitation or restoration efforts would have to be site-specific and included in treatment plans for each project.
- e. Fire Suppression/Tactics- Monitor and take an appropriate management response when dispatched using VFD and BLM engines. Contain all fires at < 10 acres 95 % of the time during FIL 4 and 5, during FIL 1, 2, 3 contain all fires < 200 acres 95% of the time.

## **MCGREGOR RANGE**

### **Category/Number: D-1**

**1. Location** – This FMU lies in the Tularosa Basin and extends west to U.S. Highway 54 and north to NM Highway 506. The southern boundary is the New Mexico-Texas state line and the eastern boundary generally follows the edge of the rim on Otero Mesa. Elevations vary from 4,000 feet in the basin to 5,500 feet on the edge of Otero Mesa. This FMU contains 362,009 acres of BLM land, all of which has been withdrawn by the US Dept of Defense for training purposes.

**2. Characteristics** – The McGregor Range FMU is used by the US Army as an artillery range and as such contains large amounts of unexploded ordnance and other hazardous materials. The policy of the US Army and the BLM is that civilians are not allowed entry in this FMU. Therefore the appropriate suppression response for this FMU is to monitor from outside the

FMU.

McGregor Range lies on the northern fringe of the Chihuahuan Desert, which occupies the plateau between the Sierra Madre Occidental and the Sierra Madre Oriental in north-central Mexico and extends into a portion of Arizona, and into the Rio Grande and Pecos River Basins in New Mexico and Texas.

Terrain within the FMU varies from flat alkali hardpan desert to sandy, rolling dune desert to rocky, steep slopes that climb to the top of Otero Mesa.

Vegetation is typical of Chihuahuan desert consisting primarily of creosote, saltbush, mesquite, sand sage, yucca, cactus and several species of desert grasses. These are primarily alkali sacaton, black grama, sand dropseed and bush muhly.

Human impacts are extensive in this FMU. The military uses the McGregor Range for artillery and missile-firing practice. There are unexploded ordnance issues and chunks of scrap metal from exploded drones and missiles throughout the area.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-From 1202 records there has been a total of 11 fires in this FMU. Four have been natural-caused fires for 9,380 acres and seven were human-caused and burned 21,830 acres.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-The upland part of this FMU is FRCC 1; the lower deserts are FRCC 2 and are mainly along and east of Highway 54 and are due to frequent human disturbance activities and cattle grazing.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**-There are a few structures, mainly related to military activities within the FMU that are at risk from wildland fire. The BLM is constrained from entering this FMU due to safety concerns relating to unexploded ordnance throughout the area.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role by allowing naturally occurring fires to burn unhindered.

**8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildland Fire Use – The entire acreage would be allowed to burn in an unplanned natural ignition. However, due to the discontinuous nature of the fuels and the terrain, natural fires will likely not exceed 2,000 acres in size anywhere within the FMU.
- b. Prescribed Fire – There is no opportunity for prescribed fire use in this FMU due to the hazards of unexploded ordnance.
- c. Non-fire Fuel Treatments – There are no opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments.

- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration – There has been no rehabilitation of previous fires within this FMU. It is not anticipated that future fires, either natural or human-caused, will require rehabilitation.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-The US Army has responsibility for managing man-caused wildfires in this FMU (see Ft. Bliss Fire Management Plan). The BLM will not enter areas below the rim of Otero Mesa and south of Highway NM 506 without military escort and will stay on approved roads due to unexploded ordnance hazard.

## **BROKEOFF MOUNTAINS WSA**

Category/Number: **D-2**

**1. Location** – The Brokeoff Mountains WSA is located in the southeastern corner of Otero County, New Mexico, approximately 50 miles southwest of Carlsbad, NM. The WSA contains 31,606 acres. The eastern boundary is formed by bladed dirt roads. The northern and western boundaries are along section lines. The southern boundary is formed by State land and the Texas State line and adjoins a portion of the Guadalupe Mountains National Park. Best access to the area is off US 62-180, north on TX FM 1437 through Dell City and then east to Crow Flats.

**2. Characteristics** –This WSA consists of a desert mountain range which follows a north-south trend and abuts the south-western wall of the Guadalupe Escarpment near the New Mexico-Texas State line. The range gradually ascends from an average height of 4,600 feet in the northern half of the WSA to a high point of 6,550 feet on Cutoff ridge. The WSA is characterized by a series of limestone hills and ridges.

The lowlands are characterized by desert grasses and shrubs typical of Chihuahuan deserts. The uplands are a pinon-juniper grassland savanna with shrubs such as ceanothus, cactus, agave, yucca and catclaw intermixed.

There are numerous cultural sites scattered throughout the FMU mostly consisting of agave pits.

There are no wildlife or plant species of concern listed for the Brokeoff Mountains FMU.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-From 1202 records, there have not been any fires reported.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-This WSA historically is FRCC 1. Currently the FRCC is 2, having missed one or more fire return intervals.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**-There are no values at risk in this FMU.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk within this FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Brokeoff Mountains WSA by

allowing natural wildfires to burn.

b. Return those lands listed as FRCC 2 to FRCC 1. Optimally, 33% of the FMU would burn in a ten-year period.

## **8. Fire Management Strategies**

a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit-A management decision to allow the fire to burn will be developed and implemented if the wildfire burns over 8 hours. It is unlikely that any ignition would consume more than 2,000 acres in this FMU due to the continuity of the fuels.

b. Prescribed Fire – There are opportunities for broadcast burns within the WSA after burn plans are developed. Optimally, 10,000 acres over ten years would be treated.

c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are very limited opportunities to use the Non-fire Fuels Treatments within this WSA.

d. Post Fire Rehabilitation– Reseeding of native grasses, erosion control devices and fencing to control livestock use in the FMU should be considered in the event of a wildfire exceeding 200 acres.

e. Suppression-All man-caused wildfires will be suppressed by BLM resources with the goal of containing all fires at < 150 acres 95% of the time.

## **ORGAN MOUNTAINS WSA/ACEC**

Category/Number: **D-3**

**1. Location** – The Organ Mountain WSA/ACEC is located in eastern Dona Ana County 15 miles east of Las Cruces, New Mexico and is accessible off US Hwy 70. The FMU contains 40,672 acres of Bureau of Land Management land, 37 acres of DOD land, 79 acres of State trust lands, and 585 acres of private land. The Organ Mountains run north and south, elevations range from 5,000-9,000 feet. The mountain range is 17 miles long and runs from Highway 70 on the north to Rattlesnake Ridge on Fort Bliss military land on the south. It is bounded on the west by private land and public land and on the east by White Sands Missile Range, Fort Bliss, and private land.

**2. Characteristics** – The topography of the FMU is characterized by steep, rocky mountain slopes with a rapid transition to the desert floor below.

Soils are gravelly to loamy entisols and aridisols, bedrock and unconsolidated parent materials. The mountains support a variety of vegetation including creosote stands, mixed desert grasses, desert shrubs, mixed mountain shrubs, juniper and oak woodlands and ponderosa pine stands.

There are a great deal of recreation opportunities in this area. These include hiking, sightseeing, mountaineering, camping, picnicking and birding to name a few. The Organs contain 14 miles of developed public trails that receive daily use.

There are numerous mines in the area with a few associated historical structures still intact within the FMU. There is also much evidence of pre-historic human use located in caves

throughout the FMU.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-According to 1202 data for the FMU, 6 natural caused fires have burned 107 acres and 10 human-caused fires have burned 634 acres for a total acreage of 741.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-The Organ Mountains are FRCC 1 with FRCC 2 in the lower elevation brush sites. FRCC 2 lands are due to fire exclusion and cattle grazing which has allowed an increase in woody species and a decrease in grass species.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**- The Organ Mountains are a prominent visual feature from the city of Las Cruces and any fires in the mountains receive a great deal of public attention. Large, extended duration wildfires would not generally be tolerated by the community.

**6. Communities at Risk** –The FMU abuts dozens of expensive newly-constructed homes in the Talavera Subdivision. Much of the area around the subdivision will not sustain fire spread, allowing concentration of fire suppression resources on protecting the few structures that exist where fire will carry.

#### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. To allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Organ Mountains including the Dripping Springs Natural Area by allowing naturally occurring fires to burn.
- b. Reduce the expansion of brush species onto lands that were historically grasslands thereby converting lands in FRCC 2 to FRCC 1 by prescribed fire treatments
- c. Allow for the clearing of safety zones in the Natural Area using prescribed fire.

#### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The proximity of the FMU to a large urban population precludes large fire use. Lightning fires that begin in the upper portions of the range during FIL 1, 2, or 3 will be allowed to burn until they begin to back into areas where confinement strategies can be implemented in a safe manner.
- b. Prescribed Fire –Broadcast burn an average of 200 acres per year.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments –Mechanical thinning with chainsaws. Optimally, 25 acres/year would be treated on a ten-year rotation schedule.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation–On fires > 25 acres in size temporary fencing may be used to keep livestock from grazing in burned areas until grasses have recovered.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-Fire is considered beneficial to the resources in this FMU. However, the proximity to homes and the community of Las Cruces dictate the need to contain all human caused fires at < 5 acres in size 95 % of the time. BLM engines and VFD resources will respond as dispatched.

## **ROBLEDO MOUNTAINS WSA/ACEC**

Category/Number: **D-4**

**1. Location** – The Robledo Mountains WSA/ACEC is located in central Dona Ana County. The WSA is approximately 8 miles northwest of Las Cruces and is bounded on the east and north by the Rio Grande River and private lands and is bounded on the south and west by dirt roads. The WSA contains 12,999 acres of BLM lands, 585 acres of private lands and 42 acres of State lands for a total of 13,626 acres.

**2. Characteristics** – This WSA contains most of the Robledo Mountain range, a north-south trending fault block. Lookout Peak and Robledo Mountain are the predominant features in the WSA. Maximum and minimum elevations within the WSA are 5,876 feet and 4,800 feet. The WSA is characterized by rugged, steep canyons and southward dipping cuestas.

Vegetation consists of desert grasses and mixed desert shrubs such as ocotillo, agave, sotol, mesquite and creosote.

There is extensive evidence of use by pre-historic humans mostly within small caves in the FMU.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-Numerous lightning fires have occurred in the Robledo Mountains. Most are limited in growth potential due to discontinuous fuels. The 1202 data shows 3 reported natural caused fires for a total of 27 acres burned.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-The Robledo Mountains are FRCC 2 with FRCC 1 in brushy areas. Brush encroachment and the loss of fine fuels have converted much of the lower area (50% of the FMU) to FRCC 2.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**- The values at risk in this FMU are range improvements and the communication site on top of Lookout Peak.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk within this WSA. There are radio towers on top of Lookout Peak.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Robledo Mountains by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. 33% of the FMU would be allowed to burn over a 10 year period.

### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– Any naturally occurring ignition in the WSA would be considered by management as an opportunity for resource benefit. A Wildland Fire Implementation Plan will be developed and implemented if the wildfire burns over 8 hours.

- b. Prescribed Fire – Prescribed fire is of little use in this FMU due to lack of fuel.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There is very little opportunity for the use of non-fire fuels treatments in this area.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation– There has been no rehabilitation of previous fires within this FMU. It is not anticipated that future fires, either natural or human-caused, will require rehabilitation.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-All unplanned man-caused ignitions in this FMU will be suppressed by BLM resources with the goal of containing all fires at < than 50 acres 95% of the time

## WEST POTRILLO WSA/ACEC

Category/Number: **D-5**

**1. Location** – The West Potrillo WSA/ACEC encompasses 186,944 acres of BLM land, 38 acres of private lands and 17,200 acres of State lands for a total of 204,182 acres and is located in southwestern Dona Ana County and southeastern Luna County. The WSA is approximately 30 miles southwest of Las Cruces, New Mexico and 30 miles northwest of El Paso, Texas. The boundaries are formed by maintained State, county and ranch roads. Portions of the southwest, northwest and northeast boundaries are bordered by large blocks of State land. The southern end extends nearly to the US-Mexico border as it follows the unpaved access road between Columbus and Santa Teresa, NM.

**2. Characteristics** – The West Potrillo Mountains contain some 48 volcanic cones concentrated in a north-south orientation through the center of the WSA. The peaks range in elevation from 4,500 to 5,400 feet. Broad plains slope gently to the east and west away from the central mountain chain. Wide basins surrounded by volcanic cones are found in the central portion of the WSA. Mount Riley consists of three, high, steep, intrusive peaks clustered together east of the West Potrillo Mountains in the southeast corner of the WSA. The highest peak, Mount Riley, reaches an elevation of nearly 6,000 feet. Prominent talus slopes and alluvial fans surround the base of the peak. The WSA is the largest relatively undisturbed expanse of Chihuahuan Desert in New Mexico.

The West Potrillo WSA/ACEC contains outstanding opportunities for primitive recreation pursuits. These pursuits include hiking, backpacking, horseback riding, hunting and geological sightseeing. Other uses of the area include livestock grazing and cinder mining in the southern end of the WSA.

The area is home to numerous wildlife species. Of interest are the raptor species that winter here. Golden eagles, great horned owls and Swainson hawks nest in the WSA. Plant species of concern is the night blooming cereus, a state-listed endangered plant species.

Cultural features within the WSA include Classic Mimbres and El Paso phase pre-historic sites which are of interest due to the location and distance from water.

The basins lying between the mountain peaks of the West Potrillos hold large expanses of desert grasslands and shrub savanna. Representative species are creosote, cholla cactus and mesquite.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-Lightning has caused a few fires in this FMU. Fires have grown quickly due to winds and the abundance of fine fuels in the inter-mountain basins but also die quickly with any increases in humidity and where fuel continuity becomes sparse. According to 1202 data there has been one reported lightning fire that burned 2400 acres and 2 human-caused fires for 703 acres.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**-Historically, the West Potrillo WSA/ACEC FMU was classified as FRCC 1. The fire regime of the FMU has been altered due to fire suppression and cattle grazing and the FRCC is now 2.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**-The values at risk in this FMU are scattered range improvements.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

- a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the West Potrillo WSA/ACEC by allowing naturally caused fires to burn unhindered. Optimally, 33% of the FMU would burn over a 10 year period.
- b. Use prescribed fire to create a vegetative mosaic, with emphasis on reducing shrub (mesquite, creosote and cholla) encroachment into predominately grassland areas. Optimally, 50,000 acres would be burned over a ten-year period.

### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The entire burnable acreage of the FMU would be allowed to burn from a natural ignition after the implementation of a Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP).
- b. Prescribed Fire – There is some opportunity for prescribed fire within the basin areas of the FMU. These will be analyzed on a project level basis. Optimally, 5,000 acres per year would be broadcast burned.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration –Fires >500 acres will require temporary fencing to control livestock use for two years following the burn.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-All unplanned human-caused ignitions in this FMU will be suppressed by BLM resources using least-cost containment methods such as burning out from roads or natural barriers. The goal is to contain all of these fires at < 250 acres 95 percent of the time.

## SIERRA DE LAS UVAS MOUNTAINS WSA/ACEC

Category/Number: **D-6**

**1. Location** – The Las Uvas WSA FMU is located in northwestern Dona Ana County, approximately 30 miles northwest of Las Cruces, New Mexico and 7 miles southwest of Hatch, New Mexico. The WSA contains 11,091 acres of BLM land, 48 acres of private land and 79 acres of State land. Approximately 80 percent of the WSA is bounded by State and private lands. The remaining boundaries are roads.

**2. Characteristics** – This FMU consists of the northwest part of the Sierra de Las Uvas. The Las Uvas Mountains are composed of tilted, bedded volcanic rock with a gentle western slope and cliffs on the east side. The WSA is characterized by mesas, buttes, and canyons. Elevations within the WSA range from 4,600 feet in the northern part of the area to 6,198 feet near the White Gap in the south.

Vegetation is primarily grasses and desert shrubs, with widely scattered juniper on the north facing slopes at higher elevations.

There are scattered pre-historic cultural sites mostly related to the Mogollon culture.

**3. Wildland Fire History**-There has been numerous lightning-caused fires within this FMU. A few of these have become large fires requiring numerous suppression resources before containment. The 1202 data reports show only one lightning fire for 11,856 acres and one human-caused fire for < 1 acre.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**- The Fire Regime for the Las Uvas FMU is II for the majority of the range. The current FRCC is 2 due to fire suppression and cattle grazing.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**-The values at risk in this FMU are range improvements.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

a. To allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Las Uvas WSA/ACEC by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. Optimally, 33 percent of the FMU would burn within a ten year period.

b. Use prescribed fire to move FRCC 2 lands to FRCC 1 creating a mosaic of vegetation and reducing the invasion of shrubs onto grasslands.

### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The burnable portions of the WSA would be allowed to burn in an unplanned natural ignition. A WFIP would be in place after 8 hours of burning, outlining trigger points for suppression and detailing resource benefits and effects.
- b. Prescribed Fire- Optimally, 1000 acres per year would be broadcast burned under controlled, prescribed conditions.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There is very little opportunity for the use of non-fire fuels treatments in this area.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation– All fires > 500 acres would be temporarily fenced to exclude livestock grazing for a period of not less than two years.
- e. Suppression/Tactics- All unplanned human-caused ignitions will be suppressed in this FMU by BLM resources using least-cost containment strategies of burning out from natural barriers and/or roads. The goal is to contain all of these fires at < 250 acres 95% of the time.

## **FLORIDA MOUNTAINS WSA/ACEC**

Category/Number: **D-7**

**1. Location** – The Florida Mountains WSA FMU is located in southeast Luna County, approximately 10 miles southeast of Deming, New Mexico. The WSA includes 22,407 acres of BLM lands, 85 acres of State lands and 812 acres of private lands. The FMU is bounded on the north by State and private lands. The eastern and southeastern boundaries are formed by County Road BO20 and ranch roads extending south from the county road. The western boundary is formed by a powerline right-of-way and by State and private lands in the Mahoney Park area.

**2. Characteristics** – The WSA consists of steep, rocky terrain dissected by numerous canyons. Elevations range from about 4,300 feet to over 7,000 feet.

Vegetation is typical Chihuahuan desert consisting primarily of grasses and mixed desert shrubs at the lower elevations to scattered juniper and mountain shrubs on the peaks and ridges.

Many areas just outside this FMU are experiencing mining activities. There is much evidence of past mining within the FMU including open mine shafts and adits, prospect pits and trenches, mine dumps, tailings piles and structures such as headframes. These impacts are found in virtually every canyon on the mountains east side.

The FMU provides habitat for the night-blooming cereus cactus which is listed as Endangered by the State and proposed for federal listing.

Cultural resources in the FMU consist of bedrock mortars and a large campsite consistent with the Mogollon culture.

**3. Wildland Fire History-** There have been a few lightning-caused fires in the Florida Mountains. None in recent history have become large fires. The 1202 database lists one

lightning fire for 10 acres.

**4. Fire regime/condition class-** The current FRCC is 1 in the higher terrain and 2 in lower areas where the grasses are susceptible to grazing and shrub encroachment has occurred.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints-**The values at risk in this FMU are range improvements, historic mine structures and spring developments.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

#### **7. Fire Management Objectives**

a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Florida Mountains by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. Optimally, 15% would be burned over a ten year period.

#### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The entire acreage for the WSA would be allowed to burn in an unplanned natural ignition after implementation of a WFIP. Due to fuel continuity and arrangement, few, if any fires would grow larger than 500 acres.

b. Prescribed Fire – There is very limited opportunity for prescribed fire within the WSA due to topography and sparse fuels.

c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments. These will be looked at on a project level basis.

d. Post Fire Rehabilitation– It is not anticipated that future fires, either natural or human-caused, will require rehabilitation.

e. Suppression/Tactics-All unplanned, human-caused fires will be suppressed by BLM resources. The goal is to contain all of these fires < 100 acres 95% of the time.

### **COOKE’S RANGE WSA/ACEC**

Category/Number: **D-8**

**1. Location** – The Cooke’s Range WSA/ACEC FMU encompasses 27,477 acres. 24,017 acres are BLM lands, 2,225 acres of State lands and 1,235 acres of private lands. The Cooke’s Range is located in Luna County, approximately 15 miles north of Deming, New Mexico. The boundary for the southern half of the WSA is primarily dirt roads, with some State land. The northern boundary is formed by State and private lands.

**2. Characteristics** – Cooke’s Peak, with an elevation of 8,400 feet rises over 3,600 feet above the surrounding plains and dominates the landscape for miles around. Portions of the north and east slopes of Cooke’s Peak are within the boundaries of the WSA, however much of the south and southwest slopes are on cherry-stemmed State and private lands. Several ridges, rising between 1,000 and 3,000 feet above the surrounding terrain, run the length of the WSA. These ridges, which form the backbone of the Range, are dissected by dozens of drainages and secondary ridges. Several steep-walled canyons and drop-offs are located in the WSA.

The vegetation within the Cooke's Range is diverse and includes communities of pinon/juniper, mountain mahogany and oak scrub woodlands, grama and tobosa grasslands, creosote and mesquite shrub lands.

There are numerous mining claims within the FMU but none are active at this time. Recreational opportunities abound, but are limited due to access problems for the general public.

There are several known cultural sites within the Cooke's Range including a significant petroglyph site in the southeast part of the FMU. Several historic sites are associated with the Butterfield Trail which forms the southeast boundary of the FMU.

**3. Wildland Fire History-** There have been some lightning fires reported within the Cooke's Range FMU but only one for 5 acres has been verified and extinguished. There has been one man-caused fire within the FMU during the last twenty years according to 1202 data.

**4. Fire regime/condition class-** The Fire Regime of the Cooke's Range is a combination of II and III. The lower grasslands and desert areas are II and the higher shrub and juniper areas III. With an altered Fire Regime due to human habitation, fire exclusion and grazing practices, the lower, more accessible areas are currently in FRCC 2 (40%) with FRCC 1 (60%) in the higher elevations.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints-** The values at risk in this FMU are range improvements. There are some historic mine buildings within the FMU.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk inside the FMU boundary. The Ghost town of Cooke is just to the northeast of the boundary. Fort Cummings is about ½ mile to the east of the FMU.

### **7. Fire Management Objectives:**

a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Cooke's Range FMU by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. Optimally, 25% of the FMU would burn within a ten year period.

### **8. Fire Management Strategies**

a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The entire acreage of the WSA would be considered for wild fire use. The only constraints on fire use in this FMU are riparian areas and known cultural sites. A WFIP would be prepared within 8 hours and would identify trigger points for suppression action.

b. Prescribed Fire – There is some opportunity for prescribed fire use within the WSA.

However, due to the inaccessibility of the area, prescribed fire is not practical at this time.

c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments. These will be looked at on a project level basis.

d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration –. It is not anticipated that future fires, either natural or human-caused, will require rehabilitation.

e. Suppression/Tactics- All unplanned man-caused ignitions will be suppressed by BLM resources within the FMU with the goal of containing all of these fires at < 250 acres 95 % of the time.

## **CEDAR MOUNTAINS WSA/ACEC**

Category/Number: **D-9**

**1. Location** – The Cedar Mountains WSA/ACEC is located in southwestern Luna County, approximately 26 miles southwest of Deming, New Mexico. The FMU contains 14,898 acres of Bureau of Land Management land. There are no state or private lands located within the FMU. The northern and eastern boundaries of the WSA/ACEC are formed primarily by graded dirt roads. The southern and western boundaries are formed by State and private lands and approximately 3 miles of graded roads.

**2. Characteristics** – The Cedar Mountains WSA contains a 4-mile segment of the Cedar Mountains Range. This mountain range is essentially a northwest-southwest trending ridge with scattered peaks. Drainages are steep and rocky at their origins along the mountain ridge. The lower elevations are characterized by more rolling hills and broader drainages. Elevations range from 4,700 feet in the northeast portion to 6,215 feet atop Flying W Mountain in the southern end of the WSA.

The vegetation of the Cedar Mountains is typical Chihuahuan desert in the low-lying areas consisting of a mixture of desert grasses such as tobosa, gramas, sand dropseed and alkali sacaton and shrubs including many cactus species, mesquite and creosote. The upper reaches of the Cedar Mountains are characterized by mountain mahogany/oak scrub.

The Cedar Mountains provide habitat for the night blooming cereus, a cactus species on the State endangered species list and a candidate for federal listing. The species is widespread in the area but not abundant in any area.

Cultural features in this FMU consist of Animas phase pueblo sites and may be eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

**3. Wildland Fire History**- There is evidence of lightning-caused fires in the FMU mostly in the grassland swales of low-lying areas. There have not been any fires reported in this FMU in the 1202 database.

**4. Fire regime/condition class**- The Cedar Mountain FMU is a Fire Regime II. The grassy fuel and sparse brush have burned in the past. The FRCC of the FMU is 2 due to missing fire cycles.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints**- There are archaeological sites in the FMU that are at risk.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk within the FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives:**

- a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Cedar Mountain WSA/ACEC by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. Optimally, 33% of the FMU would burn in a ten year period.
- b. Use prescribed fire to move FRCC 2 lands to FRCC 1 creating a mosaic of vegetation and reducing the encroachment of shrubs onto grasslands.

**8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The entire acreage of the FMU would be considered a wildfire use project provided a WFIP were put into effect.
- b. Prescribed Fire – There is some opportunity for prescribed fire within the WSA/ACEC primarily in the grassy lowland areas. Optimally, 200 acres a year would be broadcast burned.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration –All fires > 200 acres will need temporary fencing to exclude livestock grazing for a minimum period of two years.
- e. Suppression/Tactics- All unplanned human-caused ignitions will be suppressed within this FMU by BLM resources utilizing least-cost containment strategies. The goal is to contain all of these fires at < 250 acres 95% of the time.

## **ALAMO-HUECO MOUNTAINS ACEC**

Category/Number: **D-10**

**1. Location** – The Alamo-Hueco Mountains ACEC is located in southeastern Hidalgo County in the bootheel of New Mexico, approximately 70 miles south-southeast of Lordsburg. This WSA contains 17,394 total acres of which 16,462 acres are Federal, 653 acres of State and 279 acres of private lands. The northern boundary of the WSA is formed by a maintained dirt road. The remainder of the WSA is bounded almost entirely by private land.

**2. Characteristics** –The Alamo Hueco Mountains ACEC contains numerous State-listed and Federal candidate plant and animal species, desert bighorn sheep habitat, cultural and paleontological values, and scenic values.

The FMU contains most of the Alamo-Hueco Mountains. The mountains are highly eroded volcanics characterized by mesas and vertical cliffs with long, sinuous canyons. Elevations range from about 4,800 feet on the pediment slopes to 6,838 feet on the unnamed peak at the head of Black Canyon.

Vegetation is typical of Chihuahuan deserts and consists of desert grasses, mixed desert shrubs, scattered juniper and oak brush.

**3. Wildland Fire History:** There have been no reports of wildfire in this FMU.

**4. Fire regime/condition class:** The Fire Regime for the Alamo-Hueco Mountains is historically II, with III in some of the areas that have more brush and junipers. The FRCC of the area is 1 (75%) on the upland and mountain sites and is FRCC 2 (25%) on the lowland and canyon bottom sites due to a departure from historical desert grasslands to a more shrub-dominated landscape. This departure is attributed to impacts from humans, mainly from ranching practices and fire exclusion.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints:** There are no values at risk in this FMU.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives:** Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Alamo-Hueco Mountains by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. Up to 50 % of the FMU would be allowed to burn over a ten year period

**8. Fire Management Strategies.**

a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The entire WSA would be within the allowable acreage to burn in an unplanned natural ignition. However, due to private land holdings within the FMU, careful and close consultation with the landowner must occur in order for this to be a viable option. A WFIP will be developed and implemented if the wildfire burns over 8 hours.

b. Prescribed Fire – There is limited opportunity for prescribed fire within the WSA due to the discontinuous nature of the fuels, distance from the Field Office and the large amounts of private land that fragments the FMU.

c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments. These will be looked at on a project level basis.

d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration –Fencing to control livestock use in the FMU will be used in the event of a wildfire consuming fenceposts.

e. Suppression/Tactics- All unplanned human-caused ignitions within the FMU will be suppressed by BLM resources with the goal of containing all fires at < than 250 acres 95% of the time.

## **BIG HATCHET MOUNTAINS WSA/ACEC**

Category/Number: **D-11**

**1. Location** – The Big Hatchet Mountains are located in southern Hidalgo County, in the bootheel of New Mexico and approximately 50 miles southeast of Lordsburg, New Mexico. The WSA includes 67,479 acres of Federal lands, 6,730 acres of State lands and 126 acres of private lands for a total of 74,335 acres.

**2. Characteristics** – The Big Hatchet WSA/ACEC FMU is an isolated mountain range with very steep, rugged slopes, etched by deep canyons and includes rolling toe-slopes on all sides of the range. Elevations range from 4,400 feet along the lower toe-slopes to 8,366 feet atop Big Hatchet Peak.

The FMU contains a variety of vegetation types including mixed desert shrubs (mesquite, creosote, tarbush, catclaw) mainly on the bajadas surrounding the mountains, grasses (gramas, dropseeds, tobosa) and mountain shrub types (mountain mahogany, oaks, sotol, agaves) along the lower slopes of the mountains, and pinyon-juniper communities with scattered Chihuahua pine at the higher elevations.

Cattle grazing and hiking are the predominant uses within the FMU. The Continental Divide National Scenic Trail bisects much of the FMU.

Cultural resources in the Big Hatchets are rich and include several small prehistoric sites and one large, undisturbed site with several ring middens and associated features.

The Big Hatchet Mountains provide habitat for two State-listed endangered species of plants (Scheer's pincushion cactus and night-blooming cereus) and one State-listed endangered animal (desert bighorn sheep).

**3. Wildland Fire History:** According to 1202 data there has been one lightning-caused fire which burned 800 acres in this FMU. There are numerous fire scars evident on older juniper trees throughout the FMU.

**4. Fire regime/condition class:** The Fire Regime for the Big Hatchet Mountains is I in grasslands and III in the areas with some woody vegetation. The current Fire Regime Condition Class is 1 on the mountain slopes and peaks, and 2 in the lower elevations due to missed fire cycles attributed to fire suppression and cattle grazing.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints:** High value cultural sites of prehistoric origins have been identified and would require protection from the effects of fire.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives:**

- a. Allow naturally-occurring wildfire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Big Hatchet Mountain WSA/ACEC. Optimally, 25 % of the FMU would burn over a ten year period.
- b. Reduce fuel buildup, decreasing the potential for catastrophic wildfire by using prescribed broadcast burning.

**8. Fire Management Strategies**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The entire acreage within the FMU would be allowed to burn from a natural ignition source provided a WFIP is put in place.
- b. Prescribed Fire – There is opportunity for prescribed fires within the FMU. There is a plan to treat 10,000 acres using prescribed fire to enhance desert bighorn sheep habitat and reduce fuel loading. This is to be accomplished over a five year period and then re-treated on a 20 year cycle.

- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments. These will be looked at on a project level basis.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration –Fencing to control livestock use in the FMU will be used in the event of a wildfire consuming wooden fence posts.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-Any man-caused fires within the FMU will be suppressed by BLM resources with the goal of containing all of these fires at < than 250 acres 95% of the time.

## **GUADALUPE CANYON/COWBOY SPRING WSA**

Category/Number: **D-12**

**1. Location** – The Guadalupe Canyon WSA is located in southwestern Hidalgo County, New Mexico and is 70 air miles south-southwest of Lordsburg, New Mexico and 30 miles east of Douglas, Arizona. The WSA contains 4,146 acres of BLM land. The WSA is bounded by private land on the east, by the NM-Arizona border on the west, by the US-Mexico border on the south and the Coronado NF on the north.

The Cowboy Spring WSA is located in southern Hidalgo County, approximately 50 miles south of Lordsburg, New Mexico. The WSA contains 6,666 acres of Bureau of Land Management land. There is no State or private inholdings. A portion of the northeast boundary is formed by Cowboy Rim. The remainder of the WSA is bounded by State and private lands.

**2. Characteristics** – The Guadalupe Canyon WSA is dominated by Guadalupe Canyon, a southeast draining canyon that flows into Bavispe Creek south of the Mexico-Arizona border. It is one of the few creeks in the United States that are part of the Yaqui River drainage. Slopes are gentle to moderate. Elevations vary from 3,980 to 5,715 feet. Vegetation ranges from sycamore riparian forest to mixed desert shrub, grass, to juniper-oak woodland in the higher elevations.

The Cowboy Spring WSA is dominated by Cowboy Rim, a prominent ridge 6,300 feet in elevation, running generally north-south through the east half of the WSA and curving to the west in the northern one-third of the WSA. The western portion of the WSA consists of the upper reaches of several canyons which drain to the southwest. The most prominent of these canyons is Elephant Butte Canyon which is about 325 feet deep.

Species of concern found in the FMU include the New Mexico ridgenose rattlesnake, the jaguar, the Mexican long-nosed bat and the lesser long-nosed bat.

**3. Wildland Fire History:** There have been two large wildfires within this FMU in the period from 1984 to 2003. One was lightning-caused and burned 640 acres. The other was human-caused and burned 1500 acres.

**4. Fire regime/condition class-** The Fire Regime for the Guadalupe Canyon/ Cowboy Spring FMU is II with I in the areas with some woody vegetation. The current FRCC is 1, due to recent fires and good grazing management.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints-** There are no values at risk in this FMU. There are endangered species concerns due to occupied habitats within the FMU by the New Mexico ridge-nosed rattlesnake and the Mexican long-nosed bat.

**6. Communities at Risk –** There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives-**

a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Guadalupe Canyon and Cowboy Springs WSAs by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. Up to **75%** of the FMU would be allowed to burn over a ten year period.

b. Reduce unnatural fuel loading within suitable habitat for the New Mexico ridgenose rattlesnake by broadcast burning during the cool season (November to March).

**8. Fire Management Strategies-**

a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit–The Guadalupe Canyon WSA is managed for fires by the Coronado NF under an MOU that disregards the boundaries between the FS lands and the adjoining BLM lands and acknowledges the fact that the closest fire management resources are those from the adjacent Douglas Ranger District. The majority of the Peloncillo unit of the Douglas Ranger District is considered a fire use area, so any natural ignitions on either agencies lands will be managed as if one contiguous unit. The entire acreage of the WSA would be considered for fire use after a natural ignition. A WFIP would be jointly prepared by the USFS and the LCDO within 18 hours and a resource advisor assigned. No fire use is allowed for the period of July to November within habitats occupied by New Mexico ridgenose rattlesnakes (See the Conservation Measures from the Biological Assessment and Evaluation for the FMPA for the New Mexico ridgenose rattlesnake 6.3.1.2 RN3).

b. Prescribed Fire – There is opportunity for prescribed fire within the WSA to benefit the New Mexico ridgenose rattlesnake. Cool season burns, mainly in drainage bottoms, up to 1,500 acres in size every 5-10 years would benefit the species habitat.

c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments.

d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration –Fencing to control livestock use in the FMU will be used in the event of a wildfire consuming wooden fence posts.

e. Suppression/Tactics-Man-caused fires will be suppressed by USFS Douglas RD forces with the objective of containing 90% of these fires at < 50 acres.

**GRAY PEAK WSA/ACEC**

Category/Number: **D-13**

**1. Location** – The Gray Peak WSA/ACEC FMU is located in southwest Hidalgo County, about 12 miles southwest of Animas, New Mexico. The WSA encompasses 21,539 total acres, of which 19,535 acres are BLM lands, 1385 acres are private land and 619 acres are state land.

**2. Characteristics** – This FMU consists of some of the most rugged and remote areas of the Peloncillo Mountain chain. The area is dominated by a major mountain ridge that is 11 miles in length and runs north/south with five major peaks, dozens of smaller hills and ridges, all separated by canyons of various sizes.

The vegetation within the Gray Peak FMU is diverse and contains some 30 State sensitive plant species including the Night Blooming Cereus. This area supports one of the most extensive examples of Madrean evergreen woodland in New Mexico with several species of Mexican oaks and the Mexican pinyon pine.

Caves in the area show evidence of prehistoric use. No formal archaeological surveys have been conducted, but some sites show great potential for cultural deposits.

Visitation to the area is extremely low due to remoteness and inaccessibility. The area does provide outstanding opportunities for primitive and unconfined forms of recreation such as hiking, hunting, backpacking and wildlife viewing.

**3. Wildland Fire History:** According to 1202 data, there have not been any fires recorded in this FMU since 1984.

**4. Fire regime/condition class:** The Fire Regime for the Gray Peak FMU is a mixed regime but is mostly III. The current FRCC is 1.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints:** There are no values at risk in the FMU.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives:**

a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Gray Peak FMU by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. Up to 33% of the FMU would be allowed to burn over a ten year period

**8. Fire Management Strategies.**

a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The entire acreage within the FMU would be allowed to burn in an unplanned natural ignition given the following constraints: A Wildland Fire Implementation Plan is approved and in place within 8 hours of ignition and a resource advisor is available that is knowledgeable about the natural and cultural resources and the threatened and endangered species within the area.

b. Prescribed Fire – There are opportunities for broadcast prescribed fire within the WSA. Optimally, 5,000 acres every 10 years would be burned to maintain the vegetative mosaic that is currently found throughout the FMU.

- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments. These will be looked at on a project level basis.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation and/or actions needed for Restoration –Fencing to control livestock use in the FMU will be used in the event of a wildfire that consumes wooden fence posts.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-All unplanned man-caused ignitions will be suppressed within the FMU utilizing BLM resources with the goal of containing all of these fires at < 50 acres 95% of the time.

## **PELONCILLO MOUNTAINS WSA/ACEC**

Category/Number: **D-14**

**1. Location** – The Peloncillo Mountains WSA/ACEC is located in northeast Hidalgo County, New Mexico along the Arizona State line. The WSA contains 3,979 acres of Bureau of Land Management land. There are 14 acres of private lands in the WSA. The WSA is bordered on the north by State and private land and on the east and south by public and State land. The WSA boundary follows, almost entirely, legal subdivisions. This boundary was the result of the mixed ownership pattern of public, State and private land.

**2. Characteristics** – The WSA lies in a rugged part of the Peloncillo Mountains, a north-south trending mountain range that roughly parallels the Arizona and New Mexico border. Topographic features include rolling hills and flatlands transitioning into steep mountain slopes. Elevations range from 4,325 feet in the eastern part of the WSA to 6,400 feet along the Arizona border.

Vegetation within the FMU is characterized primarily by oak-juniper woodlands on north-facing slopes which transition to a desert grassland with a desert shrub component on south-facing slopes.

The FMU is home to a small herd of desert bighorn sheep.

There are cultural resource values within the FMU mostly relating to the Mogollon culture.

Human activity within the FMU consists of hunting, hiking and ranching.

**3. Wildland Fire History:** There have been no fires recorded in the 1202 database in this FMU.

**4. Fire regime/condition class:** The Fire Regime for the Peloncillo Mountains WSA FMU is a mixed regime but is predominantly III. The current FRCC is 1.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints:** There are no values at risk in the WSA.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk in this FMU.

**7. Fire Management Objectives:** Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Peloncillo Mountains WSA by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. Optimally, 50% of this FMU would burn in a ten-year period.

**8. Fire Management Strategies.**

- a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The entire acreage within the WSA would be allowed to burn from a natural ignition given the following constraints: A WFIP is approved and in place within 48 hours of ignition and a resource advisor is available that is knowledgeable about the natural resources, cultural resources and the threatened and endangered species within the area.
- b. Prescribed Fire – There are opportunities for broadcast prescribed fire within the WSA. Optimally, 1,500 acres would be burned in a ten-year cycle to help maintain the vegetative mosaic currently found in the FMU.
- c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments. These will be looked at on a project level basis.
- d. Post Fire Rehabilitation–Fencing to control livestock use in the FMU should be considered in the event of a wildfire that consumes wooden fence posts.
- e. Suppression/Tactics-All unplanned man-caused ignitions will be suppressed within the FMU utilizing BLM resources with the goal of containing all of these fires at < 150 acres 95 % of the time.

**BLUE CREEK WSA**

Category/Number: **D-15**

**1. Location** – The Blue Creek WSA FMU is located in northern Hidalgo and in southwestern Grant County, 24 miles northwest of Lordsburg, New Mexico. The WSA contains 17,310 acres of BLM-administered land, 5 acres of private land and 1,882 acres of State land for a total of 19,197 acres. The WSA is bounded by a powerline right-of-way and private land on the north and west sides, by a county road on the south and by Blue Creek Arroyo and a dirt road on the east side.

**2. Characteristics** – The WSA is dominated by Black Mountain, an elongated, northwest trending mountain of black basalt. Slopes are gentle to moderate. Elevation varies from about 4,000 feet on the western edge of the WSA to nearly 5,600 feet on the top of Black Mountain.

Vegetation is primarily desert shrubs such as creosote and mesquite, mixed mountain shrubs such as oaks and mountain mahogany, and scattered juniper trees at the higher elevations.

There are no known special habitats or special designated wildlife or plant species in the FMU except the night-blooming *Cereus* which is listed as endangered by the State of New Mexico and a candidate for Federal listing.

There are numerous range improvements in this FMU. These include dirt tanks, windmills,

pipelines, drinking troughs, storage tanks and corrals.

**3. Wildland Fire History:** There have been three natural-caused fires in this FMU according to data from 1984-2003. A total of 1,860 acres burned in these fires.

**4. Fire regime/condition class:** The Fire Regime for the Blue Creek WSA FMU is predominantly II. The current Fire Regime Condition Class is a mixture of 1 and 2 (about 50:50). Much of the departure from FRCC 1 is due to missed fire cycles and impacts from grazing.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints:** There are no values at risk in the WSA. The adjoining FMU, Gila Lower Box does have concerns due to riparian habitats that are homes to various threatened and endangered plant and animal species.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk.

**7. Fire Management Objectives:**

a. Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Blue Creek WSA by allowing naturally occurring fire to burn unhindered. 33% of the FMU would be allowed to burn over a ten-year period.

**8. Fire Management Strategies:**

a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– The entire acreage within the FMU would be allowed to burn in an unplanned natural ignition given the following constraints: A WFIP is approved and in place within 8 hours of ignition and documents trigger points for initiating suppression actions and a resource advisor who is knowledgeable about the threatened and endangered species within the area would be available to advise fire management personnel.

b. Prescribed Fire – There are opportunities for broadcast burning within the FMU. These will be analyzed on a project level basis when they are proposed.

c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments. These will be looked at on a project level basis.

d. Post Fire Rehabilitation–Fencing to control livestock use in the FMU should be considered in the event of a wildfire consumes wooden fence posts.

e. Suppression/Tactics-All unplanned man-caused ignitions will be suppressed within the FMU utilizing BLM resources with the goal of containing all of these fires at < 150 acres 95% of the time.

## **APACHE BOX WSA**

Category/Number: **D-16**

**1. Location** – The Apache Box WSA FMU is located in western Grant County in southwestern New Mexico about 45 miles west of Silver City, New Mexico and 45 miles east of Safford, Arizona. The WSA contains 6,267 acres of Bureau of Land Management land. The WSA is

bounded on the north by U.S. Forest Service and New Mexico State lands, with private land forming the east, south and west boundaries. The WSA northern boundary is contiguous for 1 mile with the U.S. Forest Service administered Hell's Hole WSA. The Hell's Hole WSA is within the Gila National Forest.

**2. Characteristics** – The primary feature of this FMU is the Apache Box, a deep, narrow canyon through which runs Apache Creek. Sheer cliffs rise 600 feet above the canyon floor and give way to talus slopes and table lands above the canyon. Elevations range from 4,150 feet to 6,450 feet.

Vegetation varies from desert shrubs and grasses to mountain shrub such as mahogany and oak and pinyon-juniper. Riparian species such as cottonwood, willow and sycamore line Apache Creek.

**3. Wildland Fire History:** There has been one lightning-caused fire in this FMU. That fire burned 432 acres in 2003.

**4. Fire regime/condition class:** The Fire Regime for the Apache Box FMU is mainly II. The current FRCC is 1.

**5. Values at Risk/Resource Protection Constraints:** The only values at risk in the FMU from wildfire are threatened and endangered species habitat within the riparian area of Apache Creek.

**6. Communities at Risk** – There are no communities at risk.

**7. Fire Management Objectives:** Allow fire to regain its natural ecosystem role within the Apache Box WSA FMU by allowing naturally occurring wildfires to burn unhindered. Optimally, 50% of the FMU would burn within a ten-year period.

**8. Fire Management Strategies.**

a. Wildfire for Resource Benefit– All of the uplands will be allowed to burn in the event of a natural ignition. Fires in the riparian areas on Apache Creek would be actively suppressed (See the Biological Assessment and Evaluation for the FMPA, Conservation Measures for Fire Management Activities in Riparian and Aquatic Habitats 6.3.1.1). A Wildland Fire Implementation Plan would be approved and in place within 8 hours of ignition and a resource advisor would be available that is knowledgeable about the natural resources within the area.

b. Prescribed Fire – There are opportunities for broadcast prescribed fire within the WSA.

c. Non-fire Fuels Treatments – There are few opportunities for the use of non-fire fuels treatments. These will be looked at on a project level basis.

d. Post Fire Rehabilitation–Fencing to control livestock use in the FMU should be considered in the event of a wildfire that consumes wooden fence posts. Any fires occurring in the riparian area of Apache Creek will require the installation of sediment traps in order to minimize the amount of ash and sediment entering the water (See Conservation Measure CF-3 of the above mentioned document).

e. Suppression/Tactics-All unplanned man-caused ignitions will be suppressed within the FMU utilizing BLM resources with the goal of containing all of these fires at < 150 acres 95 % of the time.

## **JORNADA DEL MUERTO WSA**

Category/Number: **D 17**

This FMU description is contained in the Socorro Field Office Fire Management Plan as the WSA lies on the border between LCDO and the Socorro FO and the management of the resources within the WSA are all done by the Socorro FO. There are 4,106 acres of LCDO BLM land within the WSA. The total area within the WSA is 26,859 acres and the fundamental fire management strategy is fire use for resource benefit where applicable. There are good opportunities for prescribed fire treatments in this FMU according to the Socorro FMP. Any man-caused wildfires will be suppressed using Socorro and Las Cruces BLM fire resources.

### **IV. Fire Management Components**

#### **A. Wildland Fire Suppression**

##### **1. Fire Planning Unit Fire History Analysis**

During the period of 1984-2003, the Las Cruces District Office averaged 15 fires per year, burning 12,750 acres annually.

On average, lightning or naturally caused fires accounted for approximately 2/3 of the number of fires while a variety of human caused fires account for the other 1/3. The majority of the lightning fires occur from May to September while human caused fires have occurred at all times of the year

While the majority of fires are relatively insignificant in terms of size and fire intensity, periodic large fire events typically burn at high fire intensity levels (FIL 5 and 6). These fires can reach several thousand acres in size in just one burning period. These fires are representative of NFFL Fuel Model 1 and 2 (Short-grass savanna and short-grass shrub). The majority of large fires in the LCDO occur in this fuel type. Other large fires occur in the isolated mountain ranges throughout the District Office area and are representative of Fuel Model 6 (pinyon-juniper shrublands).

##### **2. Suppression/Preparedness Actions**

The LCDO will use an appropriate management response to suppress all fires in accordance with management objectives based on current conditions and fire location. A response can vary from a full suppression, aggressive initial action to monitoring. Suppression strategies will be tailored to address firefighter safety, management areas with special considerations such as ACECs, critical habitat for T&E species, areas of soil instability, and areas of other resource constraints.

Requirements for fire operations/suppression plans can be found in the “Interagency Standard for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations” (Red Book) and the Office of Fire and Aviation website at <http://www.fire.blm.gov/>. The following District Office-specific plans can be accessed at the Las Cruces District Office:

LCDO Unit Aviation Plan,  
LCDO Fire Prevention/Fire Preparedness Plan,  
LCDO Fire Program Standard Operating Plan.

The LCDO maintains a fire cache sufficient to support initial attack activities and first reinforcement forces. The cache will be replenished as needed after fire activity. Equipment or supplies not stocked in the cache should be ordered through regular dispatch channels or purchased locally. All requests will be recorded on a Resource Order.

### **3. Fire Prevention, Community Education, Community Risk Assessment, and Other Community Assistance Activities (Firewise).**

#### **a. Annual Prevention Program**

Prevention and fire trespass are important portions of the LCDO fire program. Details of the prevention program may be found in the Las Cruces District Office Fire Prevention Plan- 2010 (Appendix B of the NM-LCD FMP).

Community risk assessments, Firewise workshops, public school programs and fire management education activities are conducted by the NM-LCD with assistance from the NMSO Prevention and Mitigation Specialist in partnership with local communities and interagency cooperators.

#### **b. Special Orders and Closures**

All special orders and closures due to fire restrictions are coordinated with NMSO, the affected Zone board and local cooperators, as recommended by the FMO and approved by the District Manager (see NM-LCD Fire Prevention Plan).

#### **c. Industrial Operations and Fire Precautions**

See NM-LCD Fire Prevention Plan.

## **4. Annual Fire Training Activities**

### **a. Qualifications and Fireline Refresher**

Training and fitness requirements for all personnel involved in fire suppression/prescribed fire activities/fire support can be found in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Management (Red Book). Attendance at a wildland fire refresher training along with successful completion of the appropriate level of work capacity testing is a basic requirement for all fire going personnel. Fire personnel that will be engaged in arduous firefighting procedures must also pass the Federal Interagency Wildland Firefighting Medical Qualification Standards Program prior to the work capacity test and issuance of a red card. This training and testing must be done annually for personnel to keep current on arduous and non-arduous red card qualifications as mandated by the Incident Qualifications and Certification System (IQCS).

IQCS Certification and Qualifications- This system, as required by policy, provides a listing and inventory of all individuals who are qualified or are trainees for fire assignments. It provides an historical training record, lists on-the-job training needs and results in the issuance of an Incident Qualifications card (red card). The Incident Fire Qualifications Data Base Administrator will compile and review the data from input provided by NM-LCD and enter the data into IQCS. Certification of most all District employees' qualifications and training is accomplished by the NM-LCD Red Card Committee. Certain higher-level operational positions are certified at the SFMO level only. The NM-LCD Red Card Committee is made up of the District FMO, AFMO and Fuels Specialist. The committee meets as needed to review candidate qualifications and to establish priority trainee listings. When certification is complete, the Incident Fire Qualifications Database Administrator will distribute the Red Cards.

Fire Qualifications (Red Card) Review-The LCDO Red Card Committee is responsible for having a working knowledge of the fire suppression/support responsibilities and capabilities of the personnel being evaluated.

The Red Card Committee must:

- Certify employees as qualified for ICS positions, as soon as all trainee requirements have been met.
- Certify, recommend and rank employees for fire training and establish the priority for trainees to receive classroom courses and OJT fire training assignments.
- Recommend and endorse employees for national training courses.
- Develop Resource Shortage Category list.
- Assure that the proper documentation is completed for certification or denial and employees are advised.
- Establish the priority order in which trainees are assigned to incidents based on established criteria

Needs Assessment : Annually a fire management training needs assessment is prepared. This establishes a position inventory and identifies shortages for critical ICS position needs. This information is provided to supervisors responsible for completing Individual Development Plans

for employees. This provides supervisors with information needed for career counseling and meeting the individual’s ICS goals, as well as organizational needs.

### **b. Fire Season Readiness**

Preparedness is based upon the assessment of fuel and weather conditions from the National Fire Danger Rating System. Fire season readiness will be accomplished before the historical start date of the fire season for the Las Cruces District Office. Training and work capacity testing will be completed before this date to ensure availability of the fire fighting resources and to maintain normal year readiness.

The fire season start and stop dates represent the period of time during which 90% of the fires historically will occur. Fire Season Start and Stop dates for initial attack planning are:

**March 15<sup>th</sup> to August 30<sup>th</sup>.**

These dates are used as guidance for staffing initial attack resources. However, it must be noted that fires can occur any time of year and it is possible for large fires to happen outside of the established fire season. Permanent fire employees, federal employees outside the fire program with proper fireline qualifications and local volunteer units must be used to fight these fires on lands administered by the LCDO. Recruitment and training for these individuals must occur when it is convenient for them.

### **5. Detection**

The Fire Management Staff may request aerial detection services on an as-needed basis from Silver City Dispatch. The majority of fires are reported by private citizens to local authorities. Agency cooperators and field going BLM personnel also are responsible for reporting a large percentage of fires.

### **6. Fire Weather and Fire Danger**

The LCDO maintains 3 Remote Automated Weather Stations (RAWS) as follows:

<b>Name</b>	<b>GOES ID</b>	<b>Elevation</b>	<b>Latitude</b>	<b>Longitude</b>
Dripping Springs	324B900C	6,172	32.19.24	106.35.12
McGregor	326335BC	4,886	32.43.11	105.6217
Hachita Valley	3243D7A0	4,291	31.42.00	108.20.30

The dispatch center staff is responsible for recurrent daily activities to manage RAWS data and for the input of key dates to initiate seasonal data collection and termination.

A portable RAWS station is available to be ordered from the Silver City Fire Cache. It can be installed to provide site specific weather information for projects where permanent RAWS information is not sufficient to collect needed data for a specific site.

All unit RAWS use NFDRS fuel models along with the energy release component (ERC) to develop fire danger ratings on a daily basis:

LEVEL	CRITERIA
LOW	ERC is within the 0-24 percentile range for the weather stations within the geographical area. 1000 HR. FUEL MOISTURES greater than 20%. YEARLY PRECIPITATION of weather stations at normal or above.
MODERATE	ERC is within the 25-50 percentile range for the weather stations within the geographical area. 1000 HR. FUEL MOISTURES range between 16-20%. YEARLY PRECIPITATION at weather stations averages no more than 10% below normal.
HIGH	ERC is within the 51-80 percentile range for the weather stations within the geographical area. 1000 HR. FUEL MOISTURES range between 13-15%. YEARLY PRECIPITATION at weather stations averages 10 to 25% below normal
VERY HIGH	ERC is within the 81-95 percentile range for the weather stations within the geographical area. 1000 HR. FUEL MOISTURES range between 8-12%. YEARLY PRECIPITATION at weather stations averages 25 to 45% below normal.
EXTREME	ERC is greater than the 95 percentile range for the weather stations within the geographical area. 1000 HR. FUEL MOISTURES are less than 8%. YEARLY PRECIPITATION at weather stations averages more than 45% below normal.

## 7. Aviation Management

Agency cooperators and private contractors are available locally to provide point-to-point transportation, aerial ignition platforms and reconnaissance missions to support fire and resource management activities. The Unit Aviation Manager responsibility for the LCDO lies with the District Fire Management Officer (FMO). (See the NM-LCD Unit Aviation Plan).

## 8. Initial Attack

All wildfires within the LCDO will be managed with suppression actions consistent with preplanned dispatch plans in conformance with resource management objectives. Tactics and strategies will be based on available resources, current and predicted weather and fire behavior. The type of suppression action will be dictated by the FMU the fire is located in. **Firefighter and public safety is always the first priority.**

Under the Joint Powers Master Agreement, New Mexico is divided into initial attack areas. In each of these areas, one agency has agreed to take the lead in providing initial attack protection for all lands, regardless of ownership. This provides an equitable exchange of protection and workload, and allows the use of the “closest forces” concept for fire suppression. The net result is a more efficient and effective suppression organization throughout the state.

The highest priority FMUs for initial attack are as follows:

1. Pinos Altos
2. Timberon
3. Aguirre Springs
4. La Cueva, Cox Visitor Center and Dripping Springs

As fire complexity increases, additional resources will be requested through SDC.

### **9. Extended Attack and Large Fire Suppression**

BLM direction is outlined in the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations.

Transition between Initial Attack and Extended Attack will be determined by the Incident Commander (IC) in coordination with the line officer. Timeframes are when the initial attack organization on the fire most likely will not be able to meet the management objectives for the area. At this time a Wildland Fire Situational Analysis (WFSA) will be prepared identifying a new strategy and complexity assessment.

The WFSA is a decision making process in which the agency administrator or representative describes the situation, evaluates the expected effects, establishes objectives and constraints for the management of the incident, selects an appropriate alternative, and documents that decision. The analysis will be completed to evaluate suppression responses to wildland fires that have exceeded initial attack response or exceeded planned management capability. Enhanced resource values may be a collateral benefit of the planned action under the WFSA, but cannot be part of the objective of the action. An alternative that analyzes the least cost will be included in all WFSAs.

The agency administrator, his/her representative, and the FMO or Incident Commander will prepare the WFSA. The format and level of detail required depends on the specific incident and its complexity. The key is to document the decision.

The required elements to be addressed in the WFSA are:

Current Situation	Record of Decision
Evaluation Criteria	Review/Evaluation/Update
Alternatives	Probability of Success
Analysis of Effects	Consequence of Failure

## **10. Other Fire Suppression Considerations**

FMUs are unique in their management and operation. Refer to the appropriate FMU description for any other considerations related to fire suppression.

### **B. Wildfire for Resource Benefit**

#### **1. Description of Wildfire for Resource Benefit Opportunities.**

Within the Las Cruces District Office there are 16 FMUs where wildfire may be used for resource benefits. These FMUs are:

1. McGregor Range
2. Brokeoff Mountains WSA
3. Organ Mountains WSA/ACEC
4. Robledo Mountains WSA/ACEC
5. West Potrillos WSA/ACEC
6. Las Uvas WSA/ACEC
7. Florida Mountains WSA/ACEC
8. Cooke's Range WSA/ACEC
9. Cedar Mountains WSA/ACEC
10. Alamo-Huecos Mountains
11. Big Hatchet Mountains WSA/ACEC
12. Guadalupe Canyon/Cowboy Spring WSA\*
13. Gray Peak WSA/ACEC
14. Peloncillo Mountains WSA/ACEC
15. Blue Creek WSA
16. Apache Box WSA

\* covered in Bootheel Fire Management Plan.

#### **2. Preplanned Implementation Procedures**

Before an ignition is managed as wildfire for resource benefit, authorized and qualified people must follow a clearly defined decision making process. This section describes the required steps for evaluating and managing a wildfire for resource benefit. The steps and procedures to be implemented once an ignition is discovered and confirmed as a natural ignition "must" consider the following:

- Identification of local approval authority.
- Identification of evaluation criteria for the initial "GO-NO GO" decision.
- Risk Assessment
- Provision for daily revalidation.
- Timely decisions by the appropriate Line Officer.

A Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) will be initiated for all candidate wildfires. However, only the most complex fires being managed for resource benefits will require completion of all parts of a WFIP. For an estimated 90% of all wildland fires, information needed for WFIP Stage I decision analysis will be all that is needed, since most wildland fires in the LCDO generally stay small and inactive before being extinguished naturally. When wildland fires occur, pre-planned descriptions from the FMU, in combination with the fire situation will lead Stage I decisions.

Progressive development of the WFIP will occur for wildland fires managed for resource benefits. Objectives, fire location, cause, conditions of fuel continuity, current fire activity, fire location, predicted weather and fire behavior conditions, and risk assessment results will indicate when various WFIP Stages must be completed (See the Wildland and Prescribed Fire Management Policy Implementation Procedure Reference Guide). Most wildfires for resource benefit will require completion of only Stage I and part of Stage II information during their management. When resource benefits become more important as strategic decision factors, additional planning and documentation requirements (additional WFIP Stages) are involved.

Annual activities required to designate and manage wildfire for resource benefit include:

- Update notification procedures to alert county and local communities when a wildfire for resource benefit is started in each FMU.
- Update management action points for each FMU.
- Obtain Smoke Management Registration from NMED.
- Wildfire for resource benefit applications will follow National Mobilization Guide direction when in preparedness level IV or V.
- Identify the number of Cultural resources sites for each FMU, and any mitigation factors that will need to be completed.

### **3. Initial Action Procedures**

All wildfires will be subject to an initial attack response. This response will include size up of the current fire situation, determination of cause and estimate of potential fire spread. A suppression action will be initiated unless the fire is determined to be a candidate for management as a wildfire for resource benefit. All ignitions determined to be human caused will be suppressed using an appropriate management response.

### **4. Required Personnel**

The district will need to order a qualified Strategic Operations Planner (SOPL) to manage any wildfires for resource benefit. The Las Cruces District Office currently has one qualified SOPL.

### C. Prescribed Fire

Acres treated by prescribed fire annually on the NM-LCD:

2001	0 acres
2002	0 acres
2003	6,275 acres
2004	2,691 acres
2005	6,565 acres
2006	15 acres
2007	969 acres
2008	1,360 acres
2009	8,240 acres

60% of all acres burned were in FRCC 2 and 3 with about 50 percent of those acres moving to FRCC 1 after the burns.

The fire management staff in collaboration with the Renewable Resources staff initiates most of the prescribed fire projects. Resource specialist input is crucial to ensure projects meet NEPA compliance.

Prioritizations of projects are determined by the following:

- 1) Fuels Reduction around a federally listed community at risk from wildfire
- 2) Fuels reduction around communities of interest
- 3) FRCC 3 lands
- 4) FRCC 2 lands
- 5) Maintenance of FRCC 1 lands

WUI projects, in priority order are:

Pinos Altos Fuel Reduction, Timberon Fuel break, Bent Watershed Fuels Project, Caballo Mountain Communication Site and Organ Mountains recreation sites.

Non-WUI prescribed fire projects are scattered across the district office area and include Apache Box, Peloncillo Mountains, Big Hatchet Mountains, Iron Mountain, Caballo Mountains, Cooke's Range, McGregor Range, Cornucopia Draw and Timber Mountain. The office also conducts wildlife habitat enhancement burn projects with contributed funds from the Sikes Act. Since 2001 the district has received about \$20,000 per year for Sikes Act projects.

Cooperative agreements between the BLM livestock allotment permittee and the BLM are handled through a collaborative effort between the Fuels Management Specialist and the Range Conservationist responsible for the allotment where the project is planned. Most burns require two growing seasons of rest from grazing post-burn.

Smoke Management Registrations are requested prior to burning but the goal is to request the registration as soon as the burn plan is completed and the burn is scheduled.

Positions needed for the prescribed fire workload are 2 qualified Type 2 Burn Bosses, 2 qualified firing bosses and 2 holding specialists.

Burning within the District Office takes place year round. The majority of pile burning takes place during the winter and early spring, but can also take place during monsoon season. Grassland burns take place before green-up in late winter. Pinyon/Juniper burns take place during late spring and summer and have the tightest windows for opportunity as they require the warmest and driest parameters to meet objectives.

Prescribed burn bosses are required to evaluate prescribed burns each day after completion of burning to assess results and effectiveness of the burn. These evaluations are maintained as part of the project file. The Fuels Specialist and the Range Conservationist, as per the District Office monitoring plan, accomplish long term fire effectiveness monitoring.

Maps displaying prescribed fire treatments since 2001 are maintained in Geographical Information System (GIS) databases by the LCDO and NMSO GIS staff.

### **Smoke Management/ Air Quality**

The air quality across most the District Office is generally good. There is a non attainment area for PM 10 around the community of Anthony and an ozone maintenance area in Sunland Park. To avoid further impacts, both areas are taken into consideration when burning.

There are Class 1 airsheds near, but outside of the District Office boundaries. The USFS' Gila and White Mountain wilderness areas are Class 1 airsheds. The Bosque del Apache Wildlife National Refuge and the Carlsbad Caverns National Park are Class 1 airsheds. All prescribed burns within the LCDO must consider impacts to these airsheds and attempt to minimize smoke impacts by taking into account the prevailing winds, size of the project, ventilation forecasts, fuel moistures and topographic features.

The LCDO is aware of, understands and complies with the NM Smoke Management Program and regulations. The Smoke Management Program web page can be accessed from the Air Quality Bureau's website @ [www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb](http://www.nmenv.state.nm.us/aqb). Smoke Management Program support can be reached by calling: 505 476-4330.

In November, 2007, the state revised the ventilation waiver for burning under fair or poor ventilation. This "Combined SMP1 and 11 Statewide Waiver for Broadcast and Pile Burns" is valid for all SMP1 and SMP11 burns registered in the State of New Mexico. Burners do not need to send a waiver request to use this waiver. However, burners must meet all the conditions of the waiver.

Emission reduction techniques are used whenever possible. These techniques include firewood removal, using slash for erosion control in drainages, burning when fuel moistures are low, burning when relative humidities are at their lowest and leaving unburned pockets of fuel.

#### **D. Non-Fire Fuel Applications**

Approximately 5 mechanical fuels treatment projects for a total of 500-5,000 acres are currently planned each year across the District Office. Approximately 2,500 acres are fuels reduction projects in the wildland/urban interface (WUI).

Fuel reduction using hand mechanical methods outside the WUI are usually done in pinyon/juniper woodlands and in grasslands with shrub encroachment. These areas are targeted to be converted from FRCC 3 to FRCC 2. There are some non-WUI areas that may be treated to convert FRCC 2 to FRCC 1.

The LCDO contracts most of its mechanical fuels reduction projects.

Since the advent of the National Fire Plan the mechanical fuels reduction workload has generally increased:

2001	35 acres
2002	347 acres
2003	259 acres
2004	351 acres
2005	833 acres
2006	1640 acres
2007	1032 acres
2008	1360 acres
2009	770 acres

The LCDO has been increasing the use of chemical treatments for fuels reduction. In 2004, approximately 1,060 acres on the Double Arrow allotment were treated with the chemical Tebuthion to reduce pinyon and juniper encroachment onto historical grasslands. In 2008, approximately 15,500 acres of mesquite and creosote shrublands were treated with chemicals that fuels dollars bought. In 2009, 17,200 acres of mesquite and creosote-invaded grasslands were treated by chemicals with fuels dollars.

A goal of treating 73,249 acres by prescribed fire and non-fire treatments annually for the district office was developed in the RMPA for Fire and Fuels in 2004. The acreage figure was based on a full funding and staffing scenario needed to treat all acres that are in FRCC 2 and 3 and move them to FRCC 1. It is expected that this update to the RMP that specifically covered Fire and Fuels Management would be in place for 20 years until updated again. In the description of each FMU the acres treated is based on the best case scenario from the RMP update. These numbers are based on a target that reflects acres of lands that would benefit from some type of treatment and are not indicative of annual budget and manpower constraints. The actual annual acres treated will probably never reach these lofty goals in a given year. Some years no acres may be treated in a given FMU but in other years more acres may be treated.

Once the burn acre target has been met within a given FMU, from either planned or unplanned ignitions, a review of objectives and strategies will be initiated to develop new fire management criteria.

### **E. Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation**

All emergency stabilization and rehabilitation (ESR) efforts will be in accordance with Departmental Manual Part 620, Chapter 3, Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation and the Draft BLM Supplemental ESR Guidance (DOI) Handbook. The objective of the Bureau's ESR program is to mitigate the adverse effects of fire on the soil-vegetation resource in a cost-effective and expeditious manner and to reduce the accelerated wildland fire return intervals and/or invasion of weeds. The purpose of rehabilitation is either to emulate historical or pre-fire ecosystem structure, function (including the re-establishment of the natural fire cycle), diversity, and dynamics consistent with approved land management plans, or if that is not feasible, then to restore or establish a healthy, stable ecosystem in which native species are well represented. State Standards and Guidelines for Rangeland Health for Grazing Management may include additional direction concerning post-fire rehabilitation. Appropriate use of ESR Funds includes implementing practices to:

- Protect life, property, soil, water (including water-dependent resources) and/or vegetation resources.
- Prevent unacceptable on-site or off-site damage.
- Facilitate meeting land use plan objectives in conformance with land use plan decisions (per the Federal Land Management Policy and Management Act of 1976) and other applicable federal laws.
- Stabilize and protect known cultural resources from possible further post-fire degradation, and from restoration activities.
- Reduce the establishment of undesirable or invasive species of vegetation.
- Assist in meeting State Standards for Rangeland Health.
- Repair or replace BLM minor facilities or structures destroyed or damaged by fire.

Appropriate ESR plans will be developed for each fire or complex, as determined by the State Office Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Manager.

### **F. Community Protection/Community Assistance**

There are two communities in the LCDO that are listed on the Federal Register as communities at risk from wildfire. These are Pinos Altos and Timberon. Both of the communities are included in county CWPPs. Fuel reduction projects are ongoing and more are planned for these communities.

There are communities of interest within the LCDO that are at risk from wildfire. They are Bent, Kingston-Hillsboro, Winston and numerous subdivisions scattered throughout the district office.

## **Rural Fire Assistance**

The LCDO area contains 66 rural Volunteer Fire Departments that are eligible for Rural Fire Assistance grant funding.

In 2002, 13 grant requests were filled for \$83,200.

In 2003, 17 grants were issued for \$110,000.

In 2004, 13 grants were issued for \$81,600.

In 2005, 15 grants were issued for \$74,750.

In 2006, 21 grants were issued for \$206,000.

In 2007, the program was not funded.

In 2008, 4 grants were issued for \$59,890.

In 2009, 12 grants were issued for \$106,600.

These monies go to the departments to enhance their abilities to fight wildland fires on BLM or nearby lands and are typically used for wildland firefighting equipment, personal protective equipment and wildland fire training.

## **Ready Reserve Program**

The Ready Reserve program is a BLM national initiative to help local Volunteer Fire Departments build capacity to respond to wildland fires alongside BLM partners. In 2007, LCDO wrote a proposal to the Ready Reserve program to help build a trained, qualified and responsive volunteer force throughout Southwestern New Mexico. In 2007, the LCDO fire program received a grant to do this. In 2007, \$12,534 was spent on training, training supplies and equipment to get the proposal off the ground. In 2008, \$57,750 was spent on training and equipping 16 fire departments in SW NM. In 2009, \$1,040 was spent on training supplies. In the three year life of the grant, the increased capacity and ability of those 16 fire departments in SW NM to respond with quality firefighters and equipment is many-fold. The added ability to communicate and interact safely in the wildfire environment alongside federal forces has also increased firefighter productivity and efficiency. It is widely believed throughout SW NM that the BLM should see the fruits of its Ready Reserve labors for years to come.

## **V. BUDGET AND ORGANIZATION**

### **A. Budget and Organization**

The Las Cruces District Office fire management program provides fire suppression, investigation, prevention and education, and fuels management activities for public lands that lie within the jurisdiction of the NM-LCD. The current and approved Table of Organization for NM-LCD fire management program is contained in Appendix A.

National fire program support is provided when requested. Several NM-LCD personnel outside of Fire Management are involved with Incident Management Teams as primary and alternate members. The required ICS training and refreshers for these people to maintain proficiency and certification dictate that the NM-LCD Fire Preparedness Program pay the associated cost.

The program labor and operations plan for the LCDO is shown in the tables below and was developed in accordance with the statewide and district office workforce plan. Personnel who are funded for the entire year through fire/fuels are considered base staff. This base funding is allocated annually to pre-suppression, hazardous fuels-non WUI and hazardous fuels – WUI sub-activity codes. The District Fire Preparedness table below is based on full funding for all the firefighting forces needed for the entire duration of the fire season.

<b>LCDO FIRE STAFF COSTS</b>				
<b>Resource</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>Activation</b>	<b>Costs</b>	<b>Extended</b>
FMO	1	Year Round	\$84,000	
AFMO	1	Year Round	62,000	
Fire Program Assistant	1	Year Round	48,000	
Engine Module Lead	2	March - November	86,000	
Engine Operator	2	April - September	42,000	
FFT1	1	April - September	20,000	
FFT2	4	May - August	26,000	
Dispatcher	1	Year Round	50,000	
Staffing Sub Total:				\$418,000.00
Training – Fire (NWCG)			\$30,000	
Training – HR & Safety			4,000	
Training – Militia & ICS			4,000	
Training Sub-Total:				\$38,000.00
Type 6 Engine	1	Year Round	\$16,000	
Type 4 Engine	1	February-September	15,000	
Engine Chase Vehicles	2	Year Round	12,000	
FMO Vehicle	1	Year Round	6,000	
AFMO Vehicle	1	Year Round	4,000	
Vehicle Sub-Total:				\$53,000.00
Building & Office Supplies			\$5,000	
IT/IRM			4,000	
Prevention Supplies			3,000	
Station Maintenance			7,000	
Fire Equipment			10,000	
Misc. Sub-Total:				\$29,000.00
<b>FIRE PROGRAM COSTS:</b>				<b>\$587,000.00</b>
District Overhead (7%)			\$41,090	
<b>Total budget needed for preparedness</b>				<b>\$670,090.00</b>

## Bureau of Land Management Implemented Fire Resources in 2009

Office: LLNML03230

<b>Resources</b>	<b>Quantity</b>	<b>Number of Personnel</b>	<b>Total Work Months</b>
Number of Engines:	2	8	70
Number of Water tenders:			
Number of Dozers:			
Number of Tractors / plows:			
Number of Fire Boats:			
Number of Type 1 Crews:			
Number of Helitack Crews:			
Number of Fuels Crews:			
Number of Type 2 Crews sponsored:			
Number of Smokejumpers (AK & NIFC only):			
Number of Fire Management Officers:	1		12
Number of Assistant FMOs / FCOs:	1		12
Number of Fire Operations Specialists:			
Number of Dispatchers:	1		12
Number of Other Aviation Staff (Aviation Mgr., Seat Mgr, etc.):			
Number of Mitigation/Education/Prevention Specialists / Techs:			
Number of Resource Specialists:			
Number of Fuels Specialists:	1		12
Number of Other Fire Staff: Fuels Technician	1		11
Number of PFT funded by Preparedness:	3		
Number of Career Seasonals funded by Preparedness:	5		
Number of Temporaries funded by Preparedness:	6		
Number of PFT funded by Fuels:	1		
Number of Career Seasonals funded by Fuels:	1		
Number of Temporaries funded by Fuels:			

## **Fuels Management**

Actual prescribed fire accomplishments vary greatly from year to year due primarily to weather factors. Actual mechanical acre accomplishment is based on annual budget allocation. A complete list of projects and acre accomplishments can be found in the NFPORS database. To meet the annual assigned treatment target of 73,249 acres, the Las Cruces District Office fuels management program requires the following resources:

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Current Level</b>	<b>Normal Activation</b>	<b>Cost</b>
Fuels Program Manager	1	Yearly	\$85,000
Fuels Specialist	2	Yearly	\$86,000
Fuels Equipment Maintenance	N/A	Yearly	\$15,000
Fuels Tech	2	Yearly	\$72,000
Engine Module Lead	2	Nov.-February	\$48,000
Engine Crew Lead	2	Nov.-February	\$44,000
Lead Firefighter	2	Nov.-February	\$36,000
Detail fuels burn module	8	Apr.-May	\$40,000
Fuels Equipment Replacement	N/A	Yearly	\$5,000
Fuels Project Contracts	N/A	Yearly	\$500,000
Vehicle/equipment Costs	N/A	Yearly	\$25,000
Training and Travel	N/A	Yearly	\$20,000
Field Manager Staff, Renewable Resource Staff, Multi-Resources Staff	All project funded	Yearly	\$30,000
<b>TOTAL NEEDED FOR 2010-</b>			<b>\$1,006,000</b>

### **B. Assistance Agreements and Intra/Interagency Agreements**

The overarching agreement that provides for interagency cooperation among all the land management agencies is the New Mexico Wildland Fire Management Joint Powers Master Agreement (2008). This agreement covers wildland fire management responsibilities on BLM, NPS, BIA, FWS, USFS, US Dept of Energy and the State of New Mexico lands. It details how agencies work together across jurisdictional boundaries by facilitating the coordination and exchange of personnel, equipment, supplies, services and funds.

The LCDO maintains assistance agreements with the White Sands Missile Range and Fort Bliss to provide mutual assistance on fires that are adjacent to or threatening each agencies land. The LCDO has a Memorandum of Understanding with the Coronado NF for the provision of wildfire management on LCDO fires south of the Peloncillo unit of the Coronado and also for fires that start in Mexico and threaten BLM lands across the border.

The LCDO is a participant in the Joint Powers Agreements (JPA) for the Gila-Las Cruces Zone and the Pecos Zone and has agreed to provide initial attack resources for all wildland fires within its initial attack zones, regardless of jurisdiction, using the closest forces concept. The JPA also states that the LCDO will provide a full-time dispatcher for the Gila-Las Cruces Zone/Silver City

Dispatch Center, maintain the radio hook-up between BLM and the USFS and provide the facility, phone, fax lines and staffing for the El Paso Staging Area, when activated for periods of high fire activity.

LCDO and the US Army at Fort Bliss jointly manage the lands on the McGregor Range as provided for in Public Law 106.65. Contained within PL 106.65 is the provision for a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) which states that the US Army has jurisdiction and responsibility for all human-caused fires on the range and the BLM has responsibility for all naturally occurring fires. The two agencies will provide mutual fire aid when requested through the Alamogordo Dispatch Center. The LCDO provides initial attack for McGregor Range and Otero Mesa as stipulated by the Pecos Zone JPA.

### **C. Equipment Rental Agreements**

A copy of all Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements (EERA) will be located in the LCDO Service and Supply Plan which is in the process of being developed in 2010. It will be located in the LCDO and in the Gila-Las Cruces Zone Silver City Dispatch Office.

### **D. Contract Resources**

The LCDO is in the process of creating a district-wide Service and Supply Plan which will include businesses and services related to fire and fuels needs in Southwestern New Mexico. The Plan will include hotels, eating establishments and businesses that cater to tools and equipment used in fire and fuels projects.

## **VI. Monitoring and Evaluation**

Monitoring and evaluation of the LCDO fire program will occur to determine if the program and associated projects are meeting the various resource plans directions and to determine if the costs of implementing the fire program are occurring as predicted.

Monitoring related to wildland fire or fuels related projects falls under the general monitoring and evaluation guidelines outlined in the RMP. Site specific monitoring needs are identified in analysis of individual projects.

Monitoring and evaluation techniques include, but are not limited to:

1. Site-specific observations by on-site resource specialists.
2. Field assistance trips by other technical specialists.
3. General field observations by unit officials.
4. On-going accomplishment reporting processes.
5. Formal management reviews on a scheduled basis.
6. Discussions with other agencies and the public users.

7. Management team review of monitoring results.
8. Interdisciplinary team reviews of monitoring results.
9. Involvement with existing research activities.
10. Review and analysis of records documenting monitoring results.

## GLOSSARY

**BARRIER:** May be natural or man-made, any obstruction to the spread of fire; typically, an area or strip devoid of flammable fuel.

**BURNING PERIOD:** That part of each day when fires spread most rapidly.

**CONFINE:** To restrict the fire within predetermined boundaries, established either prior to, or during the fire. These identified boundaries will confine the fire, with no action being taken to put the fire out. Tactics include, but are not limited to: indirect lines with backfiring, extended hose lays, holding along drainage, cold trailing dormant sectors, hot spotting isolated flare-up pockets, aerial retardant pre-treatments, mop up perimeters and extended patrols. Tactical aerial mobility and long distance water distribution systems shall actuate this strategy of time and distance.

**CONTAIN:** To restrict a fire to a defined area, using combination of natural and constructed barriers that will stop the spread of fire under prevailing and forecasting weather conditions, until out. Tactics include, but are not limited to: direct, parallel and indirect lines with limited backfiring, extended hose lays, improved hand lines, mop up to 300 feet into the fire area to secure perimeter from rekindle and firebrand sources. Theoretically, at this level of effort, perimeter can be considered secure more quickly and with fewer resources required for extended mop-up and patrol than compared with the confinement strategy.

**CONTROL:** To aggressively fight a wildfire, through the skillful use of personnel, equipment, and aircraft to establish firelines around a fire to halt the spread and to extinguish all hot spots, until out. Tactics are directed at total suppression of the fire as quickly as possible. The objective is to attain “control” by the advent of the following burning period. In practice, this is the traditional “10 a.m.” policy. With respect to suppression responses to wildfire, this is the most effective and time proven technique to achieve the goal of prompt fire control

**DIRECT ATTACK:** A series of related actions to cool, drown, smother, starve, beat out, or otherwise extinguish the flames of a going fire. All control action is directly against the fire edge.

**ESCAPED FIRE:** A fire which has exceeded preplanned initial action capabilities of the fire management personnel or has exceeded management objectives.

**FIRE BEHAVIOR:** The manner in which fuel ignites, flames develop, fire spreads, and exhibits other phenomena. The combined effects of the fire’s environment on how the fire acts or behaves.

**FIRE MANAGEMENT UNIT:** Predetermined area that has similar fuels, topography, management objectives, and resource needs which allow the area to be managed as a unit.

**FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN:** A plan written and agreed upon by all parties concerned to coordinate a response to wildfire so that management objectives and legal responsibilities are met. Also provides for management-ignited fire and fire use.

**FIRE REGIME:** In FRCC methodology, a five-group classification based on fire frequency and fire severity. Natural or historical fire regimes may differ from current fire regimes, as measured by FRCC departure metrics.

**FIRE REGIME CONDITION CLASS (FRCC):** A classification of the amount of departure of conditions at a given time period (such as current or future) from ecological reference conditions.

**FUEL:** The substance upon which the fire feeds. In the case of a wildland fire, it is the naturally occurring flammable materials.

**FUEL MANAGEMENT:** The practice of evaluating, planning and executing the treatment of wildland fuel to control the flammability and reduce the resistance to control through mechanical, chemical, biological, or manual means, or by prescribed fire and in support of land management objectives.

**FUEL MODEL:** A simulated fuel complex for which all fuel descriptors required for the solution of a mathematical fire spread model have been specified.

**HOLDING ACTION:** Those actions necessary to keep a fire within a designated area. On prescribed fires, these actions are taken to maintain the fire within or return it to prescription. Examples include line construction, burn-out, mop-up and facilities protection.

**INDIRECT ATTACK:** Control action conducted a distance from and usually parallel to the edge of a wildland fire in such a manner as to deprive the advancing fire of fuel and thereby halting its progress.

**INITIAL ATTACK:** The prompt, preplanned response to a wildfire.

**MAXIMUM MANAGEABLE AREA:** The limits of acceptable burned area for a prescribed fire or a wildland fire use, based on land and resource management constraints and representing a reasonably defensible location from a fire management standpoint.

**MOP UP:** The process of making a controlled fire safe by extinguishing all remnants of fire within a specified strip adjacent to the control line.

**NATURAL FUEL:** Fuel comprised of combustible wildland vegetation resulting from natural processes and not directly generated or altered by management practices, including fuel that has accumulated as a result of fire exclusion.

**NATURAL IGNITION:** An ignition resulting from any natural cause, usually lightning.

**OVERHEAD:** Individuals trained in managing fire.

**PREPAREDNESS LEVELS:** Levels of preparedness planning that recognizes increasing fire severity and provides direction for management actions at each level.

**PRESCRIBED FIRE:** A wildland fire burning under preplanned, specific conditions to accomplish specific planned objectives.

**RETARDANT:** A water-soluble fire suppression agent dropped from aircraft to retard fire spread.

**STRIKE TEAM:** A combination of “like” resources grouped together for a specific task.

**SUPPRESSION:** Any action to extinguish a wildfire.

**TOPOGRAPHY:** The physical features of the land surface – both natural and man-made.

**TYPE 6 ENGINE:** 4x4, 200 gallon, 2-3 person firefighting vehicle used primarily for wildfire suppression and management.

**TENDER:** Tank truck designed to carry between 800 and 3,000 gallons of water.

**WILDFIRE:** An unwanted fire not designated and managed as a prescribed fire, and requiring appropriate suppression action.

**WILDFIRE FOR RESOURCE BENEFIT:** The management of naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific pre-stated resource management objectives in predefined geographic areas outlined in FMPs. Operational management is described in the WFIP.

**WILDLAND FIRE SITUATION ANALYSIS (WFSA):** A decision analysis process from which a plan of action to suppress a wildfire is developed. The analysis requires development of alternative suppression strategies, and identifies the probable cost and damage associated with each.

**WILDLAND FIRE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN (WFIP):** A progressively developed assessment and operational management plan that documents the analysis and selection of strategies and describes the appropriate management response for a wildland fire being managed for resource benefits. A full WFIP consists of three stages: Different levels of completion may occur for differing management strategies (i.e. fires managed for resource benefits will have two-three stages of the WFIP completed while some fires that received a suppression response may only have a portion of stage I completed).

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