

Sagebrush Ecosystem Program

201 S. Roop Street, Suite 101
Carson City, Nevada 89701
Telephone (775) 684-8600
Facsimile (775) 684-8604

www.sagebrusheco.nv.gov

BRIAN SANDOVAL
Governor



Tim Rubald, Program Manager
John Copeland, Forestry/Wildland Fire
Melissa Faigeles, State Lands
Kelly McGowan, Agriculture
Lara Niell, Wildlife

STATE OF NEVADA
Sagebrush Ecosystem Program

SAGEBRUSH ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL
STAFF REPORT
MEETING DATE: May 31, 2013

DATE: May 30, 2013
TO: Sagebrush Ecosystem Council Members
FROM: John Copeland, Forester III, NDF
Telephone: 775-684-8600, Email: jcopeland@sagebrusheco.nv.gov
THROUGH: Tim Rubald, Program Manager, State Lands,
Telephone: 775-684-8600, Email: timrubald@sagebrusheco.nv.gov
SUBJECT: Presentation regarding actions to address fire issues as they relate to being a threat to Greater Sage-Grouse.

SUMMARY

This presentation includes an overview of the Nevada Division of Forestry's (NDF) Wildland Fire Protection Program (WFPP) by Rich Harvey, Deputy State Forester, and how it may assist the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council (SEC) in implementation of the Strategic Plan for Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse in Nevada. In addition, staff recommendations are made to incorporate portions of the WFPP and other edits related to content that might better refine the wildfire sections of the State Plan and EIS Alternative

PREVIOUS ACTION

April 22, 2013. The SEC directed staff to provide presentations at future SEC meetings on various threats to habitat and wildlife associated with the sagebrush ecosystem. This brief is one in a series to be presented to the SEC.

April 22, 2013. The SEC directed staff to further develop the Nevada State Plan and State ELA Alternative.

BACKGROUND

During the writing of the 2012 Strategic Plan for Conservation of Greater Sage-Grouse in Nevada, the WFPP was not fully fleshed out as a NDF program, but it was understood to offer several benefits in the areas of pre suppression, suppression and post fire rehabilitation and restoration. This presentation will bring the SEC up to date on the WFPP and how it can be tied more fully into the State Plan and EIS Alternative.

Nevada's Wildland Fire Protection Program (WFPP)

The Nevada Department of Conservation and Natural Resources' (DCNR) NDF developed the WFPP to defend the people and lands of Nevada against wildland fire through collaborative and comprehensive use of expertise and fire suppression, prevention, and restoration resources available throughout the State.

The challenges facing federal, state and local governments include: fighting year-round wildland fires, escalating fire suppression costs, cheatgrass and other invasive species, expanding Wildland Urban Interfaces (WUI), scattered capabilities and jurisdictions, tight budgets, declining federal resources, and cost shifting.

The WFPP fills the gaps and allows local jurisdictions to focus on all-risk emergency services. Adding wildland fire suppression capacity and capability is in the best interest of state and local governments, while focusing response capabilities where historical fire occurrences and "values at risk" intersect. The Program targets historically "unable-to-fill" suppression requests, develops more Type 3 Incident Commanders and associated staff, and provides technical assistance with the Federal Emergency Management Agency's (FEMA) Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG) Program, as well as fuel reduction projects, cost-share agreements, and training.

The WFPP is voluntary. Counties pay an annual assessment to help fund the program based on wildland fire risk. Participation allows the State to provide financial assistance with wildland fire costs, use of NDF resources on other emergencies that threaten human life and property, increased availability of suppression forces for all, enhanced fuels reduction projects, and improved restoration of burned areas. Other benefits include incident management assistance, wildfire prevention programs, public education and training.

The WFPP provides the State of Nevada and participating jurisdictions enhanced capability *before a wildfire* occurs through fuels management projects (e.g. green strips, brown strips, thinning, fuel reduction, defensible space, and community infrastructure) and fire prevention activities (e.g. public education, compliance with rules, regulations and restrictions); *during a wildfire* through increased suppression resources and coordination, Incident Management capability, technical expertise for FMAGs and cost share agreements and logistics; *after the wildfire* with Burned Area Rehabilitation and Restoration.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact associated with this item.

RECOMMENDATION

This staff report was developed to familiarize the SEC with NDF's WFPP and to highlight areas where the Nevada State Plan and EIS Alternative may be modified to include the new program.

Staff recommends that the Sagebrush Ecosystem Council authorizes the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team to update and further develop the wildland fire threat assessment and management actions section of Nevada State Plan and EIS Alternative based on, but not limited to, the new WFPP created during the 2013 Nevada Legislative session, and bring it back to the SEC for consideration and possible action at the June or July 2013 meeting.

POSSIBLE MOTION

Should the Board agree with the staff recommendation, a possible motion would be,

“Motion to authorize the Sagebrush Ecosystem Technical Team to: update and further develop the wildland fire threat assessment and management actions section of Nevada State Plan and EIS Alternative based on, but not limited to, the new WFPP created during the 2013 Nevada Legislative session, and bring it back to the SEC for consideration and possible action at the June or July 2013 meeting.”

jc:TR