



## Draft Environmental Impact Statement – Fire Management Plan Q & A

October 23, 2008

**Q: Why is Grand Canyon National Park writing a new fire management plan?**

A: National Park Service (NPS) management direction states that, "Each park with vegetation capable of burning will prepare a fire management plan to guide a fire management program that is responsive to the park's natural and cultural resource objectives and to safety considerations for park visitors, employees, and developed facilities." NPS Directors Order 18, *Wildland Fire Management*

*Grand Canyon National Park is one of the parks updating their fire management plan. The new plan will incorporate the latest science along with the most recent federal fire policy.*

**Q: Why is an Environmental Impact Statement being prepared?**

A. Under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, as amended, the NPS is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement as an essential part of this revision. This DEIS will provide a comprehensive analysis of the impacts of various fire management alternatives to park resources and will form the basis for the fire management plan.

**Q: When will the new plan be completed?**

A: The NPS expects to have a completed Fire Management Plan in early 2009.

**Q: What is the purpose and need:**

A: The new FMP will help identify and implement methods to restore ecosystem processes, ensure that fire management is consistent with NPS policy and regulations provide a framework for safe operations and a safe environment for the public and firefighters.

**Q: Does the park have a FMP at this time?**

A: Yes, Grand Canyon National Park's fire management program currently operates under the authority of the 2005 Fire Management Plan, amended in 2006-2008. The park's fire management program will continue to operate under the direction of the 2005 as amended until the new FMP is completed. The park is currently implementing the NEPA for the FMP which was completed in 1992.

**Q: Under what authority does Grand Canyon National Park's current fire management program operate?**

A: Grand Canyon National Park's fire management program currently operates under the authority of the park's General Management Plan, Resource Management Plan (1997) and the 2005 as amended Fire Management Plan. We are still operating under the NEPA document that was completed in 1992. The current plan and the new FMP will comply with NPS's management document Director's Order #18: *Wildland Fire Management*, and Chapter 4 of the NPS Reference Manual #18.

**Q: What key issues will be addressed in the new FMP?**

A: Issues that were brought forward from internal scoping and public scoping were used to develop the key issues to be addressed in the DEIS. These include smoke management and impacts to air quality, fire management in proposed wilderness areas, watershed impacts, impacts to wildlife that include threatened and endangered species, impacts to cultural resources, fire management in the wildland-urban interface, vegetation, nonnative species introduction and expansion, social and economic concerns, park operations, soundscape, public and firefighter safety, and visitor experience.

**Q: What actions will be taken to ensure that the new FMP and fire related activities will comply with air quality regulations?**

A: In cooperation with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ), Grand Canyon National Park's fire management program will comply with state burn regulations. The DEIS for the new FMP describes park-specific actions, including emission reductions, smoke management, monitoring and evaluation needed to fulfill these regulations.

**Q: What will be done to mitigate smoke impacts?**

A: Fire managers work with the Arizona Department of Environmental Quality (ADEQ) to ensure that Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) standards are met. Air Quality monitoring equipment will be set up at several locations throughout the park during fire projects to monitor smoke and air quality, and to ensure that smoke levels are within acceptable limits. Every effort is made to minimize smoke impacts during planned fire activities; however, it is difficult to predict weather patterns and smoke behavior with complete accuracy. Smoke impacts will occur even under optimum conditions.

**Q: How will fire activities within proposed wilderness areas be addressed?**

A: Fires within proposed wilderness areas would be managed to protect and restore wilderness resource values to the greatest extent practicable, and to minimize impacts to visitor experience. The new FMP will comply with the Minimum Requirement Analysis Process for fire management activities within proposed wilderness areas and Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) will be used.

**Q: Will the new FMP address the topic of wilderness designation?**

A: The new FMP will not address the topic of wilderness designation.

**Q: Will the new FMP comply with the Endangered Species Act?**

A: Under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended, an Environmental Impact Statement is being prepared as an essential part of the Fire Management Plan revision. This DEIS will provide a complete analysis of the impacts of various fire management alternatives to park resources. A biological evaluation, as part of the EIS or prepared concurrently, will include a full analysis of the predicted effects of fire management alternatives on threatened and endangered species. This biological evaluation will form the basis for consultation with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to ensure compliance with Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act.

**Q: What actions will be taken to ensure that cultural and historical sites will be protected?**

A: Under the provisions of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969 as amended, the NPS is preparing an Environmental Impact Statement as an essential part of the Fire Management Plan revision. This DEIS will provide a complete analysis of the impacts of various fire management alternatives on the park's cultural resources. As part of the DEIS a full analysis

*will occur of the predicted effects of fire management alternatives on cultural resources, including archeological sites, historic districts and structures, cultural landscapes and ethnographic resources. Since this will lead to a long term plan for fire management activities the park will be preparing a Programmatic Agreement which will form the basis for consultation between Grand Canyon National Park and the State Historic Preservation Office, to ensure compliance with Section 106 of the Historic Preservation Act and the Archeological Resource Protection Act. American Indian Tribes have been consulted throughout the drafting of the DEIS and will continually be consulted with on fire management activities.*

**Q: *What is the wildland-urban interface?***

*A: The line area or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.*

**Q: *Are there wildland-urban interface areas at Grand Canyon National Park?***

*A: Yes, South Rim Village, North Rim Developed area, Desert View are some of the interface areas at Grand Canyon National Park.*

**Q: *What will be done to mitigate the potential threat of wildland fires in Grand Canyon National Park's wildland-urban interface?***

*A: Manual and mechanical thinning projects and prescribed fire projects are planned within the wildland urban interface to reduce tree densities and fuel loads.*

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