

Appendix F

Five-Year Work Plan

for the 2004 Fire Management Plan for Mojave National Preserve

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1.0 Introduction

The 2004 Fire Management Plan for Mojave National Preserve includes hazard fuel treatments around park-owned structures and the Mid-Hills Campground. There are no prescribed fire treatments proposed.

This five year work plan outlines the sequence of activities needed to complete the hazard fuel treatments identified for implementation from 2005 to 2009. Included are site specific surveys for desert tortoise and cultural resources, as needed.

While some of these treatments can be undertaken with existing funding for fire personnel, there is the need for additional funds to take on the larger projects. Fuel treatments should take place in the off-season (December – March) because the extreme heat as well as the heavy initial attack and EMS workloads of the summer months makes fuel treatments during the fire season impractical. Currently, 3 of the 4 permanent firefighter positions assigned to the Preserve at Hole-in-the-Wall Fire Center are subject to furlough. This means that three of the four positions are in unpaid and unworked status for one to six months per year. The length of furlough is determined largely by the funds available in a given year. Thus the Preserve lacks the personnel to undertake large projects in house without additional funding. Nationally, fire funding sources and mechanisms are currently in a dynamic state as we transition to the new National Fire Plan Operating and Reporting System and the new Fire Program Analysis fund allocation system.

2.0 Treatment Areas

Treatment areas are divided into three categories: Mid-Hills Campground, Historic Ranches, and Other Preserve Facilities. None of these treatment locations are on the list of communities at risk or are officially recognized as Wildland-Urban Interface (WUI) areas.

2.1 Mid-Hills Campground

The first priority is the hazard fuel treatments in the Mid-Hills Campground. This project has been funded for FY05. The primitive campground is accessed via gravel roads and consists of an entrance bulletin board, 26 campsites, and 4 vault toilets. The campground is located along a north-facing ridgeline of the Mid-Hills in relatively dense pinyon-juniper woodland with a significant sagebrush component. There is high fuel continuity within the campground and between the campground and the surrounding lands, including the community of Round Valley located two miles to the southeast. Campground egress routes are limited to Wild Horse Canyon road, a narrow, winding, gravel road that traverses similar fuels. Wildland fire is a major safety concern in the campground due to the high fuel load and difficulty in evacuating the area.

The biggest concern is the potential for campfires to ignite surrounding vegetation, carrying fire into the surrounding pinyon-juniper and sagebrush. To mitigate this concern, work will concentrate on removing the low branches overhanging fire pits and dead wood overhanging the campsites. Additionally, fine fuels and needle cast within 10 feet of the fire pits will be removed. Fuels within 10 feet of the entrance bulletin board will also be removed. Fuel management adjacent to the vault toilets is not needed as they are constructed of non-flammable foundation, wall, and roof materials.

2.2 Historic Ranches

The second priority is the hazard fuel treatments of the historic ranches. These were existing private properties when the Preserve was established in 1994. In the intervening 10 years most of the ranching operations have been retired and the Preserve has acquired several developed areas used for ranch headquarters or homesites. Some sites sat vacant several years in the recent past, allowing fuels to accumulate. All of these sites include historic structures and/or cultural landscapes and all have been identified for re-use as employee housing sites. As of October 2004, one residence at each of the four sites was currently occupied by park employees.

Defensible space standards in Mojave National Preserve were established to provide reasonable protection from flame impingement. The residential standard follows the recommendations of the national Firewise program. The corral and outbuilding standards were developed locally to reflect local fuel conditions and fire intensity. The range of values for outbuildings is intended to provide some management discretion due to the wide range of outbuildings that exist in the Preserve. Standards are as follows:

- Residential structures: 1.5 times the height of the fuel or 30 feet, whichever is greater.
- Wooden corrals and fences: 1.5 times the height of the fuel or 10 feet, whichever is greater
- Outbuildings or unused structures: 1.5 times the height of the fuel or 10-30 feet, commensurate with the historic value, plans for future use, and flammability of exterior materials.

The ranches are listed in order of treatment priority.

1. Kessler Springs Ranch: This is a 5-acre major ranch headquarters area that is relatively compact with a large number of structures on a small area. It is currently used as a ranger residence and houses the Preserve's horses and horse equipment. The many corrals on this site are used once year for holding and working the wild burros captured during the round-up. There is also a park meteorological station at the site. There are plans to replace existing housing and add more employee housing at this location. The complex currently consists of three residential structures, seven outbuildings in various states of repair, and a series of wooden corrals. There are also three propane tanks, a propane generator,

and numerous abandoned fuel tanks on the property. Many of the structures on this site are historic and may be significant, although determinations have not been completed. There are also cultural landscape elements on the property. The surrounding plant community is Joshua tree woodland and is part of the large expanse of Joshua tree woodland that covers Cima Dome. This site is located along the edge of critical habitat for the threatened desert tortoise. There is a large fuel accumulation of woody shrubs immediately adjacent to most of the structures as the property sat vacant for several years. Initial fuel treatment will require a significant amount of saw work for removal of trees and large shrubs. It is estimated to take four firefighters about 100 hours for the initial treatment and about 35 hours annually to maintain the defensible space.

2. Valley View Ranch: This is a 4-acre ranch homesite that includes two residential structures, two outbuildings, and two small corral areas. There is a propane tank and propane generator on site. One of the structures is currently used as an employee residence. This site has been continuously occupied since at least the early 1980's. This site is located in critical habitat for the threatened desert tortoise. The surrounding plant community is Joshua tree woodland and there is a small amount of fuel accumulation adjacent to outbuildings and corrals. It is estimated to take four firefighters about 40 hours for the initial treatment and 20 hours annually to maintain the defensible space.
3. Rocking L Ranch: This is a 2-acre ranch homesite that includes one residential structure, one outbuilding, and two propane tanks. The surrounding fuels are typical of transition from the higher elevation pinyon-juniper-sagebrush and the lower elevation creosote bush scrublands. The fuels immediately surrounding the Rocking L buildings include small sagebrush, creosote bush, Mojave yucca, and juniper. This site is not located in critical habitat for the threatened desert tortoise. It is estimated to take four firefighters about 40 hours for the initial treatment and about 20 hours annually to maintain the defensible space.
4. OX Ranch: This is a 12-acre site that was a major ranch headquarters. The property consists of four residential structures and three outbuildings. The surrounding fuels are relatively sparse, as is characteristic of creosote bush scrublands. This site is not located in critical habitat for the threatened desert tortoise. There are several cultivated trees on the property that are part of the documented cultural landscape. It is expected to take four firefighters about 40 hours for the initial treatment and about 20 hours annually to maintain the defensible space.

The planning work for fuel treatments at these sites should be conducted together to gain efficiency and economy. The primary need is for cultural resource clearances and \$1000 has been funded in FY05 for that work. Each of the four sites needs to be assessed by a cultural resource specialist with the fuels crew boss to walk the site and identify the fuels that need to be removed. At the same time, cultural landscape features should be identified and marked for protection. The site should also be assessed for archaeological

concerns related to ground disturbance caused by the pulling of shrubs. Where ground disturbance is a concern, alternative fuel removal methods (ie. flush cut to ground level) should be discussed and agreed upon. There are two sites that are located in desert tortoise critical habitat -- Kessler Springs and Valley View. Although there are no known occurrences of tortoise at either location and the project is planned for implementation during winter months when tortoises are inactive, the Preserve's wildlife biologist should walk the site with the fuels crew boss to identify the fuels that need to be removed. Any burrows should be identified and protected from fuel treatment.

2.3 Other Preserve Facilities

There are several other facilities owned or operated by Mojave National Preserve. These sites either do not require initial treatment or have already received an initial treatment. These sites are generally located in very sparse fuels. The maintenance of defensible space is not expected to take a significant amount of work. Work will be accomplished at various times and with various sources of labor, including volunteers, Student Conservation Association, Youth Conservation Corps, park maintenance staff, and the Hole-in-the-Wall fire personnel. The following facilities are identified in no particular order:

- Hole-in-the-Wall Visitor Center
- Hole-n-the-Wall Campground, Group Camp, and Equestrian Camp
- Hole-in-the-Wall Fire Center
- Cima Compound, including 1 residence currently in use
- Kelso Depot
- Other Kelso properties
- Baker Compound, including 5 residences currently in use
- Baker Visitor Center
- Zzyzx Picnic Area
- Unused buildings at Zzyzx Desert Studies Center

As the Preserve is actively acquiring lands that may or may not include additional structures, this work plan is subject to revision as new needs arise. In priority order, concerns are for the reduction of hazard fuels that pose an immediate risk to: 1) structures that are occupied with people or high value property, 2) structures that have been determined to have historic significance and that the Preserve plans to maintain, 3) structures that have been identified for future administrative or residential use, and 4) all other structures.

3.0 Work Schedule for Major Fuel Treatments

Each activity will also be documented in an accomplishment report as required by the National Fire Plan Operating and Reporting System.

Month, Year	Activity	Cost
Jan. 2005	Mid-Hills Campground hazard fuel reduction (initial)	\$3000*
Mar. 2005	Desert tortoise assessment at Kessler and Valley View	\$0**
Mar. 2005	Archaeological assessment at all four ranches	\$1000*
Mar. 2005	Submit fuel treatment funding proposal for four ranches	--
	2005 subtotal	\$4000
Jan-Feb 2006	Initial fuel treatments for four ranches	\$25,000
Jan. 2006	Mid-Hills Campground hazard fuel reduction – follow-up	\$1000
Mar. 2006	Submit additional fuel treatment funding proposals as needed	--
	2006 subtotal	\$26,000
Jan-Feb 2007	Mid-Hill Campground hazard fuel reduction – follow-up	\$1000
Jan-Feb 2007	Follow-up fuel treatments at ranches: Kessler Springs and Valley View	\$6000
	2007 subtotal	\$7000
Jan-Feb 2008	Mid-Hill Campground hazard fuel reduction – follow-up	\$1000
Jan-Feb 2008	Follow-up fuel treatments at ranches: OX and Rocking L	\$4000
	2008 subtotal	\$5000
Jan-Feb 2009	Mid-Hill Campground hazard fuel reduction – follow-up	\$1000
Jan-Feb 2009	Follow-up fuel treatments at ranches: Kessler Springs and Valley View	\$5000
	2009 subtotal	\$6000
	Five Year Grand Total	\$48,000

* indicates that the activity has been funded.

** indicates that the activity will be accomplished with park staff at no cost to the project

Note: Implementation of all other activities is subject to funding!