

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
 NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 BANDELIER NATIONAL MONUMENT
 SUPERINTENDENT
 15 ENTRANCE ROAD
 LOS ALAMOS, NM 87544

OFFICIAL BUSINESS
 PENALTY FOR PRIVATE USE, \$300



Your Participation Will Help Shape the Plan

The National Park Service needs your input to develop a plan that will meet project objectives. When commenting on the proposed fire management plan, please consider the following questions.

- Are there additional issues or concerns that should be addressed in the EA?
- Are there other alternative or fire management strategies that you think should be considered?

Overview of the Planning Process

1. Public scoping* (We are here)
2. Preparation of the environmental assessment
3. Public review of the environmental assessment*
4. Decision document
5. Implementation

*Indicates opportunity for public involvement

Public Scoping Meetings

The National Park Service will hold two public open house meetings to provide an opportunity for the public to learn more about the project, have discussions with park staff, and provide comments. Maps and displays will provide information about the project. There will be opportunities to provide input in writing or during the public comment portion of the meeting.

Wednesday, May 15, 2013 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.
 Pajarito Room of the Fuller Lodge
 2132 Central Avenue
 Los Alamos, NM 87544

Thursday, May 16, 2013 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.
 Los Alamos Fire Department Station 3
 129 Street Road 4
 White Rock, NM 87544

Send Us Your Comments

Comments will be accepted until June 15th. They can be submitted on the National Park Service's fire management plan website at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/BAND>

Or can be sent to: National Park Service
 Bandelier National Monument
 Attn: Fire Management Plan
 15 Entrance Road
 Los Alamos, NM 87544

Fire Management Plan
 Environmental Assessment / Assessment of Effect
 Spring 2013

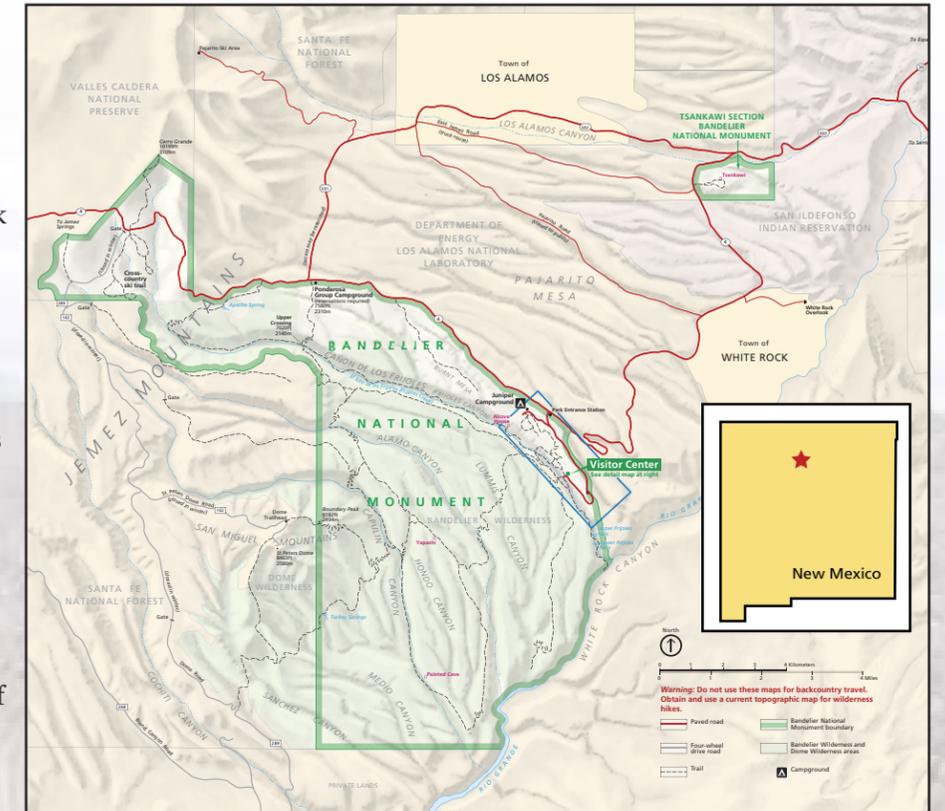
National Park Service
 U.S. Department of the Interior



Bandelier National Monument

Park Overview

Bandelier National Monument protects over 33,000 acres of rugged but beautiful canyon and mesa country as well as evidence of human presence going back over 11,000 years. Petroglyphs, dwellings carved into the soft rock cliffs, and standing masonry walls pay tribute to the early days of a culture that still survives in the surrounding communities. The monument sits at the southern end of the Pajarito Plateau and is home to the Bandelier Wilderness as well as a unique diversity of habitats specific to Northern New Mexico. Bandelier supports a wide variety of wildlife and features backcountry trails that allow visitors to experience deep canyons and large flat mesas, showcasing the entire spectrum of volcanic geology.



Bandelier National Monument Area Map

Project Background

Northern New Mexico has historically experienced frequent and widespread fire activity due to:

- Climatic conditions – semi-arid environment
- High concentration of lightning strikes – 62 thunderstorm days per year, producing 9,400 to 23,000 lightning strikes annually
- Availability of surface fuels and flammable vegetation – slow decomposition rates
- Topography – southerly exposures where the fuels tend to be drier, and steep canyons

Bandelier National Monument contains vegetation communities ranging from juniper-shrub grasslands at lower elevations to pinyon-juniper woodlands and ponderosa pine forests at mid-elevations, and mixed conifer forests at higher elevations. All of the Monument's vegetation communities have evolved under the influence of frequent, generally low intensity, surface fires and fire plays an important role in maintaining the structure, species composition, and functional integrity of Bandelier's ecosystems. However, timber extraction, over-grazing, and fire suppression over the past 100 years, combined with warmer and drier conditions as a result of climate change, have made Bandelier's vegetation communities more susceptible to high intensity crown fires. Four increasingly larger fires have occurred in the Monument over the last four decades, including the La Mesa Fire in 1977 (14,250 acres), the Dome Fire in 1996 (16,500 acres), the Cerro Grande Fire in 2000 (43,000 acres), and the Las Conchas Fire in 2011 (153,000 acres).

The National Park Service (NPS) will be preparing a new fire management plan and environmental assessment / assessment of effect (referred to hereafter as the environmental assessment) for Bandelier National Monument, New Mexico. The proposed fire management plan is intended to be both strategic and operational, guiding the full range of wildland fire program activities that support land and resource management objectives.



Photos by Sally King, NPS

Purpose of and Need for Action

The National Park Service is preparing this fire management plan environmental assessment to comply with NPS wildfire policy directives and Director's Order #18 Wildland Fire Management (2008), which requires that parks with burnable vegetation have a fire management plan. Since the monument's last fire management plan was prepared in 2005, high intensity fires and climate change have combined to result in changes to the ecosystem that are not reflected in the past plan. In preparing a new fire management plan for Bandelier National Monument, the National Park Service seeks to provide management direction that reflects these changes and also accommodates the most recent NPS and other federal government policies and scientific information.

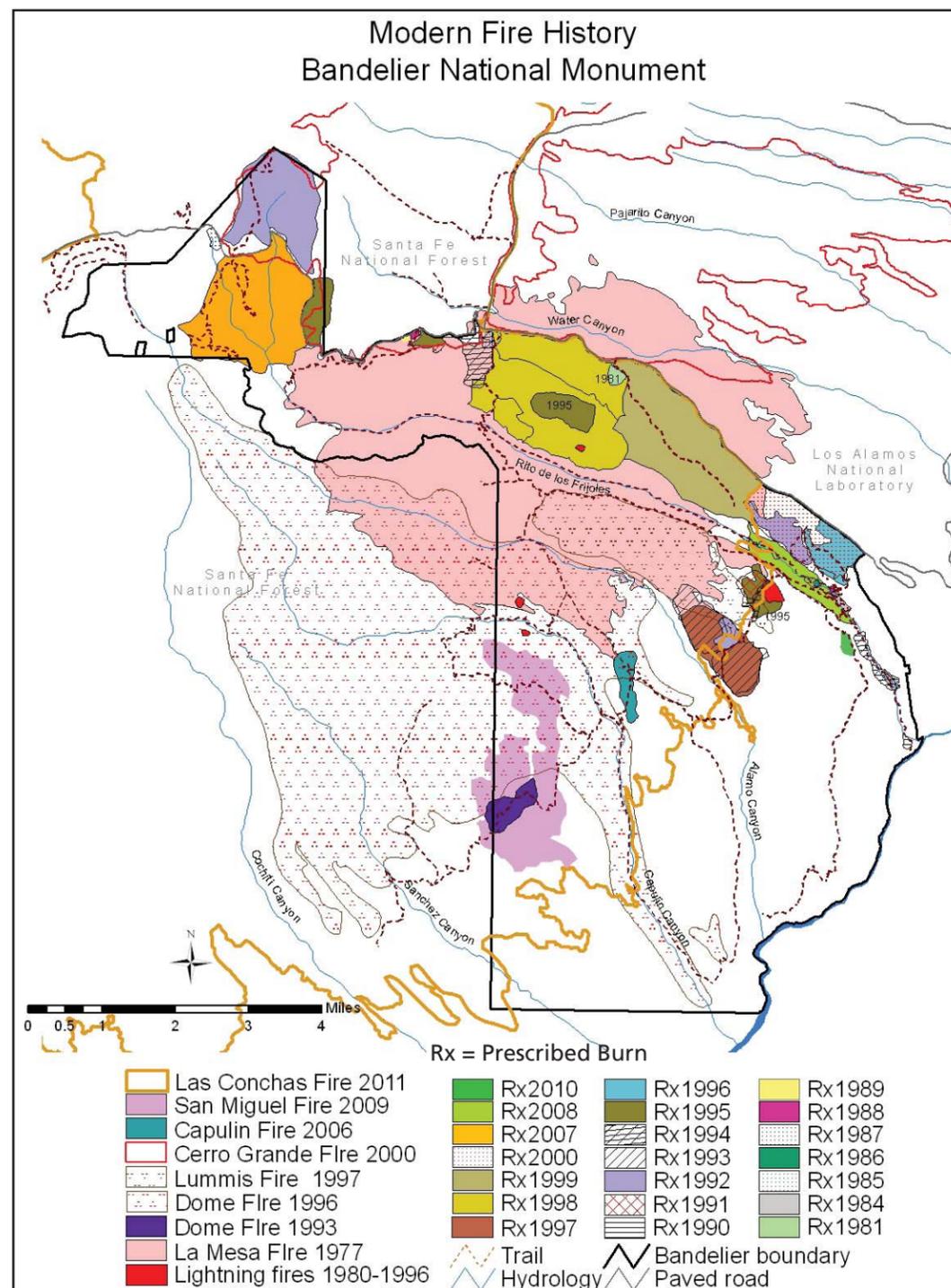
An updated Fire Management Plan (FMP) is necessary to provide the monument with the flexibility to manage fire in accordance with the NPS Wildland Fire Management Strategic Plan 2008-2012, 2009 Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, 1995 and 2001 Federal Fire Policy, the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Manual, and the related guidelines in NPS Director's Order #18: Wildland Fire Management (2008), and NPS Management Policies (2006). These policies and directives, in addition to a Congressional mandate, require an approved fire management plan in order for the park and monument to implement planned and unplanned fire management strategies.

Goals and Objectives

Goals and objectives must be achieved to a large degree for the action to be considered a success. The following draft goals and objectives have been developed for this project:

Goals

- Provide for the preservation, protection, understanding, and enjoyment of the natural and cultural resources of the monument through an integrated program where management activities support ecosystem structures and functions consistent with cultural resource preservation needs.
- Educate, inform, consult, collaborate, and maintain cooperative fire planning and management with other agencies, landowners, and local communities.
- Promote ecosystem resiliency using fire management tools.
- Where feasible and appropriate, encourage collaborative cross-boundary and interagency fire management coordination that identifies and mitigates hazards related to wildland fire.



Objectives

- Protect life, property, and the monument's natural and cultural resources from negative effects of wildland fire.
- Prevent or mitigate impacts due to fire suppression activities.
- Maintain a comprehensive Fire Information and Education Program.
- Promote fire-dependent ecosystems with the appropriate use of fire.
- Use planned and unplanned ignitions to meet fire and resource management goals and objectives.
- Foster and develop partnerships with communities and neighbors in support and protection of Bandelier's cultural and natural resources during implementation of fire management activities.
- Stimulate incremental changes across the landscape that will allow the ecosystem to respond incrementally to climate change instead of in ways that limit adaptive possibilities.

Issues

Issues are concerns or topics that need to be considered in the course of developing a successful project that is consistent with governing laws, regulations, and policies and park resources. Issues will be addressed in the analysis of the proposed project and its alternatives. Some preliminary issues identified include:

- Effective fire management within the relatively small 33,000 acres of the monument requires complex and flexible coordination with key neighboring agencies, including the US Forest Service, Valles Caldera National Preserve and the Los Alamos National Laboratory.
- Proximity of the Los Alamos National Laboratory to the monument is a particular concern because of the potential for fire to enter property that contains legacy contaminants such as heavy metals, explosives, and radioactive material.
- Use of certain fire management tools could threaten cultural sites, disrupt vegetation, be a concern to the Jemez Mountain salamander (a candidate for federal listing as an endangered species), and damage water quality.
- Fuel reduction or fire suppression has the potential to introduce exotic plant species.
- Fire management is very closely interrelated with climate change.

Potential Fire Management and Fuel Reduction Strategies

Bandelier National Monument proposes to continue most of the activities included in its present Fire Management Plan (NPS 2005). Fire terminology will be updated consistent with the National Fire Policy. The monument proposes the following fire management and fuel reduction strategies as part of the new fire management plan.

- Unplanned Actions
 - Full suppression
 - Managed actions to protect life, property, and resources
- Planned Actions
 - Mechanical and manual treatments, and prescribed fire