

Olympic National Park
600 E. Park Avenue
Port Angeles, WA 98362
March 18, 2019



Dear Friends,

The National Park Service (NPS) is requesting your input on a revised Wildland Fire Management Plan for Olympic National Park (ONP). Your participation is vital to our planning process. There are many ways to be involved, including attending one of the in-person public meetings and/or submitting electronic or written comments.

Public Meeting Open House Schedule

PORT ANGELES	QUINAULT	QUILCENE
Thursday, April 4, 2019 5:30 pm - 7:00 pm Port Angeles Senior Center 328 E. 7th Street Port Angeles, WA 98362 Phone (360) 457-7004	Monday, April 8, 2019 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm USFS Quinault Ranger Station 353 South Shore Road Quinault, WA 98575 Phone (360) 288-2525	Wednesday, April 10, 2019 4:00 pm - 5:30 pm USFS Quilcene Ranger Station 295142 Hwy 101 S. Quilcene, WA 98376 Phone (360) 765-2200

Background

The current Fire Management Plan (FMP) for ONP was approved in 2005. Since that time there have been significant changes that affect the validity of the plan. These changes include the development and implementation of the park's 2008 General Management Plan, updates to federal wildland fire policy/guidance, and an increase in the frequency of large fire occurrence that has helped inform management strategies and ecological benefits of fire within the park. In 2012, a NPS interdisciplinary team conducted a review of the 2005 FMP and recommended that the FMP be updated to incorporate those changes. The FMP revision was delayed to allow a Wilderness Stewardship Plan/Environmental Impact Statement (WSP/EIS) to move forward and identify fire management activities within the designated wilderness areas in the park. In 2017, after two of the busiest fire seasons in park history, it was determined that an updated FMP could no longer be delayed and a decision to revise the FMP was made.

As such, an EA is being prepared for the update of the park's programmatic FMP in accordance with the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) of 1969, regulations of the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) (40 CFR §1508.9), and the NPS Director's Order (DO) 12 Conservation Planning, Environmental Impact Analysis, and Decision-Making (2015). NEPA requires federal agencies to "fully consider the impacts of proposals that would affect the human environment prior to deciding to take an action." Agencies are required to make informed decisions based on analysis conducted under NEPA and input obtained from the public and interested stakeholders. This EA provides for review of the alternatives relative to the implementation of the park's programmatic FMP, a planning and operational document that ensures the protection of life and property and sensitive natural and cultural resources, while advocating for the perpetuation of natural ecosystem processes in the park.

Purpose and Need for Taking Action

The park's purpose in taking action is to update the FMP in order to meet the most current NPS and federal policies. The need for taking action is to have a plan that provides park managers with the most current direction and guidance to assist with informed decision-making related to wildland fire activities.

Alternative Concepts

Based on input from internal scoping, preliminary consultation with regulatory agencies, examination of recent fire history and trends, as well as monitoring data and current research, the NPS proposes two alternatives for examination in the EA. The no action alternative would maintain the current strategy as outlined in the 2005 FMP. Alternative B (the preferred alternative) would provide updates to the FMP that would:

- Bring the FMP into conformance with current NPS wildland fire policy directives and standards set forth in DO-18, its companion guidance document, Reference Manual 18 (RM-18), and NPS *Management Policies 2006* addressing wildland fire management and resource protection.
- Provide the park with the flexibility to manage fire in accordance with current federal wildland fire management policies and guidance adopted since the publication of the 2005 FMP.
- Improve overall management of planned and unplanned ignitions, and non-fire fuel treatments to reflect wildfire experiences of the past decade.
- Fully acknowledge wildfire as an ecological process within the park.

The following table provides a comparison of the main elements of the fire program, by alternative.

Main Program Elements	Alternative A (No Action)	Alternative B (Preferred Alternative)
Fire Management Units (FMUs)	Three units: Exclusion, Conditional, Wildland Fire Use	Two units: Non-Wilderness, Wilderness
Wildfire Management	<p>Wildfire suppression would be the wildfire management strategy for the Exclusion FMU. Wildfire for Multiple Objectives would be allowed as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximum of 200 acres per year in northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat, and an additional 600 acres once per 5 years in Conditional and Wildland Fire Use FMUs (combined)• Maximum of 500 acres over 5 years outside northern spotted owl and marbled murrelet habitat in Conditional and Wildland Fire Use FMUs (combined)	<p>Wildfire in both FMUs would be expected as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• An average of 1,200 acres of wildfire per year based on current conditions and recent fire history• Wildfire for Multiple Objectives would be allowed under appropriate safety and resource conditions. <p>The need for fire suppression repair, BAER, or BAR activities would be assessed.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct additional consultation with USFWS and environmental analysis if wildfires exceed the acreage limits. <p>The need for fire suppression repair, BAER, or BAR activities would be assessed post-wildfire.</p>	
Manual and Mechanical Treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 200 acres per year in wilderness and non-wilderness (combined) • In wilderness, manual and mechanical treatments may be used in accordance with the PMRA, when wilderness is at immediate risk from wildfires. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of 100 acres per year in the Non-Wilderness FMU • In the Wilderness FMU, treatments may be used in accordance with the PMRA when wilderness infrastructure is at immediate risk from wildfires, until final decisions are made in the Wilderness Stewardship Plan.
Prescribed Fire: Pile Burning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 200 acres per year of pile burning; maximum of 75 acres over 5 years of pile burning (non-wilderness only) • The potential use of pile burning in wilderness would be addressed in the Wilderness Stewardship Plan or separate environmental compliance and minimum requirements analysis (MRA). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximum of combined 20 acres per year of pile burning (Non-Wilderness FMU only) • The potential use of pile burning by fire in the Wilderness FMU would be addressed in the Wilderness Stewardship Plan or separate environmental compliance and MRA.
Activities in Wilderness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A PMRA would be developed for most fire management operations (see Appendix E). • PMRA guidelines would be followed and applicable PMRA strategies for each wildfire event would be incorporated into WFDSS. • Methods and tools outside the parameters of the PMRA would require a separate MRA. 	Same as alternative A.
Minimum Impact Strategies and Tactics (MIST)	MIST would continue to be used on all fire management activities.	Same as alternative A.
Resource Advisors	Consider for all fires over 10 acres	Assigned to wildfires based on the values at risk per WFDSS and Resource Advisor Guide

NEPA and Where We Are in the Process

Steps of the Planning Process	Tentative Timeline	How you can be involved
Conduct internal scoping, define purpose and need, and develop preliminary alternatives	Summer/Fall 2017	
Conduct external scoping	Winter 2018	Attend public meetings and provide your comments and ideas about the preliminary alternatives.
Analysis of public comment	Early Spring 2018	
Refine alternatives	Spring 2018	
Identify environmental impacts and select/develop preferred alternative	Spring/Summer 2018	
Prepare draft plan/environmental document	Summer/Fall 2018	
*Public review of draft plan/environmental document	Spring 2019	Attend public meetings and provide your comments about the Draft EA.
Analysis of public comment	Spring 2019	
Prepare final plan/decision document	Spring/Summer 2019	
Release final plan/decision document to the public	Summer 2019	

*Current step in the planning process.

How to Comment

1. Submit comments electronically at: <http://parkplanning.nps.gov/OLYMFMPPEA>
2. Submit comments in-person at one of the three public meetings.
3. Submit written comments by mail:
Acting Superintendent Lee Taylor
Olympic National Park – FMP EA
600 East Park Avenue
Port Angeles, WA 98362

Comments submitted by phone or email will not be accepted. Comments submitted by individuals or organizations on behalf of other individuals or organizations also will not be accepted.

You should be aware that your entire comment – including personal identifying information such as your address, phone number, and email address – may be made publicly available at any time. While you can ask us in your comment to withhold your personal identifying information from public review, we cannot guarantee that we will be able to do so.