



Fire Management Plan Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

What is a Fire Management Plan?

A fire management plan specifies how to manage wildland fire within a national park unit. The plan integrates all wildland fire management activities within the context of approved land and resource management plans. Fire management plans assure that wildland fire management goals and components are coordinated and meet regulatory and policy requirements.

Why is the project needed?

The National Park Service (NPS) is required to have fire management plans (FMP) for all units with burnable vegetation as defined by Reference Manual 18: Wildland Fire Management. Recent revisions to Department of the Interior and NPS fire management policy have resulted in changes to the requirements associated with FMPs, including new formats and templates.

Channel Islands National Park's current FMP was written in 2006 and updated last in 2013. It has expired due changes in National Environmental Policy Act and categorical exclusion (CE) use.

What are the changes from the last FMP?

Defensible space work will be more fully described and use of prescribed fire will be articulated because of more recent island fire history research. This means no broadcast or landscape level burning. Mitigations will be developed in the Environmental Assessment process to ensure that Channel Islands National Park natural and cultural resource objectives will be considered when fire management activities occur.

When will work on Fire Management Plan and Environmental Assessment start?

The project started in the fall of 2021.

When will the project be completed?

The final Fire Management Plan is scheduled to be completed in late 2022.

What is the fire history of Channel Islands National Park?

The fire history on the Channel Islands is much less pronounced than on the mainland of California. Wildland fires are much less common, and the foggy maritime climate generally limits fire spread. Although similar plant communities on the mainland experience regular fire, fire on the islands appear to be less frequent.

How does Channel Islands National Park manage wildfire response?

All wildland fires at Channel Islands National Park will be suppressed.

What types of fuels treatment methods will be used?

Hazardous fuels at Channel Islands National Park are typically managed by using mowers and hand tools. This work is done around buildings, boundaries, roads, trails, picnic areas and other sites.

Fire is occasionally used when other methods are not feasible or practical. In the past NPS and The Nature Conservancy have worked together, along with other partners to complete prescribed fire work. All prescribed fire work would follow federal, state, tribal, and local regulations and in coordination with our partners.

Will the NPS allow wildfires to burn on the islands?

No; fire history research shows that natural fire was very infrequent on the Channel Islands. The research shows records of approximately 700-1000 years between events. This is significantly different than on California's mainland. The island flora and fauna are recovering from over 100 years of heavy livestock and feral animal grazing. Widespread fire would likely slow down the recovery of native habitat.

Will the NPS be clearcutting all eucalyptus groves?

No, priority cutting will be done in areas where eucalyptus trees pose a threat to public safety (huge falling limbs) or where adjacent natural resources (such as freshwater wetlands) are threatened by eucalyptus encroachment. Some trees that have historical significance will not be cut. Others may be pruned and left in certain public areas. Protective measures will be developed to protect adjacent natural and cultural resources.

Will fuel reduction activities occur in proposed wilderness areas?

We do not anticipate doing fuel reduction work in proposed wilderness.

Will the park use bulldozers on the islands to fight wildfires?

We do not anticipate dozer-line to be used for wildfire suppression. There are not any fire bulldozers on the islands. Moving this type of equipment is logistically challenging and those vessels would be better served moving other more appropriate equipment during a wildfire.

What is defensible space?

Defensible space is the buffer created between a building and the grass, trees, shrubs, or any wildland area that surround it. This is done to slow or stop the spread of wildfire. Proper defensible space also provides firefighters a safe area to work during a wildfire.