

## **WILDLAND FIRE ANNEX X**

### **X1. Purpose, Situation, and Assumptions**

#### **X1.1 Purpose**

The purpose of this Wildland Fire Hazard-Specific Annex is to guide and coordinate agencies and organizations during wildland fires affecting Park County. Wildland fires have the potential to grow rapidly and threaten lives and property without coordinated response. General incident management principles and disaster and emergency processes should be applied to any wildland fire incident, but this annex provides additional information specific to these types of incidents.

#### **X1.2 Situation Overview**

A wildland fire is an uncontrolled fire in a vegetated area. In Park County, timber, shrubs, grasses, and rangeland make up the primary fuel sources. Fuels range from dense timber stands in varying terrain to native grasslands. Douglas fir, lodgepole pine, Engelmann spruce, sagebrush, rough fescue, and other grasses make up many of the wildland fuels in the county. The degree of fuel hazard may also be affected by drought, disease, infestation, density, and historic fire activity. The fuels, terrain, accessibility, water supply, weather, and capabilities of the firefighting agencies are all factors in a fire's growth potential. Wildland fire occurrence is weather dependent and highly variable from year to year. Park County, known for its exceptionally windy conditions, is especially prone to wind-driven wildland fires. Approximately 80-100 fires starts occur in Park County annually. (Montana DNRC, 1997)

Park County has mountainous terrain and large areas of National Forest lands. Parts of the Bozeman, Livingston, Gardiner, and Big Timber Ranger Districts of the Gallatin National Forest, the Musselshell Ranger District of the Lewis and Clark National Forest, the Beartooth Ranger District of the Custer National Forest, and Yellowstone National Park are within the Park County borders. The US Bureau of Land Management (BLM) and Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) manage many parcels of land within the county as well.

The area where human development meets undeveloped, vegetative lands is called the wildland urban interface (WUI). These areas are generally where most wildland fire losses occur. Park County has many WUI areas, some with protective measures and mitigation in place and others that do not.

Park County has eight fire departments/districts and a Fire Warden. Each department varies in its capabilities but all have at least some wildland fire suppression equipment and training. Assistance from the US Forest Service (USFS), US Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), Yellowstone National Park (YNP) and/or mutual aid departments is generally needed for larger wildland fires.

Possible wildland fire losses include:

- Structure and contents losses.
- Equipment, outbuilding, and fence losses.
- Electric and communications infrastructure losses.
- Crop, forage, and livestock losses.
- Economic losses.
- Deaths and injuries.

**X1.3 Planning Assumptions**

- Depending on weather and other conditions, wildland fires may be slow to grow or exhibit extreme growth within a short period of time.
- The geographic extent of wildland fire impacts may range from localized at a single site to tens of thousands of acres.
- The duration of wildland fires may range from hours to weeks.
- Some wildland fires on public lands may be allowed to burn if values are not at risk and resource management objectives are being met.
- Assistance from other firefighting agencies will be needed in large and interface wildland fires; agreements may be in place to facilitate these efforts.
- Extreme impacts, more than have been seen in Park County historically, are possible.

**X2. Concept of Operations**

Fire weather information is generated by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Weather Service (NWS). The local National Weather Service office is in Billings. The primary fire weather zone for Park County is Zone 123, but the Cooke City area is covered by Zone 126. Table X2A lists the various fire weather alert products that may be issued. Wildland fires may or may not be preceded by a Fire Weather Watch or Red Flag Warning. Wildland fires can occur in all types of conditions; rather, these products indicate when weather conditions are favorable for rapid fire growth. The NWS will cancel the watches and warnings once the threat has passed.

*Table X2A NOAA / NWS Fire Weather Alert Products*

<i>Product</i>	<i>Criteria / Definition</i>
Fire Weather Watch	In the next 12-48 hours, conditions are favorable for: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fire danger of very high or extreme,</li> <li>- Sustained winds of 20 mph or greater and relative humidity of 20% or less,</li> <li>- Scattered dry thunderstorms,</li> <li>- Increased thunderstorm activity after a prolonged dry period, and/or</li> <li>- Abrupt change in wind speed and direction.</li> </ul>

Table X2A NOAA / NWS Fire Weather Alert Products (continued)

Product	Criteria / Definition
Red Flag Warning	The following conditions are occurring or expected to occur: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fire danger of very high or extreme,</li> <li>- Sustained winds of 20 mph or greater and relative humidity of 20% or less,</li> <li>- Scattered dry thunderstorms,</li> <li>- Increased thunderstorm activity after a prolonged dry period, and/or</li> <li>- Abrupt change in wind speed and direction.</li> </ul>

Source: National Weather Service, 2011.

The decision points that follow are the responsibility of incident management. Note that not all decision points may be necessary and some decision points may be combined during rapidly escalating situations.

- Decision Point: Conditions are favorable for large wildland fires and rapid wildland fire growth.

When a Fire Weather Watch or Red Flag Warning is issued or very dry conditions exist, officials may become concerned of the potential for rapid wildland fire growth. At this phase, the following may be considered by local officials:

- Public service announcements regarding fire prevention and awareness
- Fire restrictions (for county/city/town officials, this is usually a ban on open burning)
- Pre-positioning of firefighting equipment throughout the county
- Coordination and consultations with the National Weather Service and federal and state firefighting agencies

State and federal agencies may implement their own fire restrictions and closures, usually in stages. Ideally, these restrictions are put in place in coordination with the local jurisdictions.

- Decision Point: A wildland fire is burning on federal lands.

The US Forest Service, US Bureau of Land Management, and Yellowstone National Park each have their own firefighting capabilities in and around Park County. In most cases, fires burning within their response areas and not threatening private property or lands are managed with their own resources, using the Incident Command System. Initial attack may be provided by local firefighting agencies. These types of fires may generate community interest. Generally, the Public Information Officer assigned to the fire will issue statements for the general public. See the [Public Information Annex](#) for additional information on this function. The Park County Fire Warden, nearby Fire Chief, or designee may be involved for informational and planning purposes, but generally does not have resources committed to the incident, unless special requests, besides initial attack, have been made.

- Decision Point: A wildland fire is burning on or threatening private or state lands.

When a wildland fire starts on private or state lands, the jurisdiction’s fire department (and in the absence of such, the Fire Warden) is responsible for management and operations of the incident,

including putting the fire out and providing for public safety. When close to federal lands, initial attack may be provided by the federal and/or state firefighting agencies. Additional assistance may be requested from mutual aid partners and state and federal agencies. If the fire is threatening federal lands, the appropriate dispatch centers should be notified and kept informed.

When a wildland fire on federal lands moves into or threatens private land or property, the Park County Fire Warden and/or the jurisdiction's fire department are typically integrated into Unified Command with the federal entities.

The priorities in wildland fire management are typically as follows:

1. Protection of human life
2. Protection of property
3. Protection of natural/cultural resources

Attempts to control and contain the fire are often made using a variety of federal, state, and local resources such as aircraft, engines, and hand crews. Tactical decisions for fighting the fire or fires are made by through the Incident Command System and are based on the geography, weather, and resources available for the specific wildland fire or complex.

Besides fighting the fire, considerations for local fire officials may include:

- Mutual Aid: Additional resources may be needed to fight the fire, assist with support functions, or respond to additional incidents that occur. These resources may include other fire departments/districts, law enforcement, Disaster and Emergency Services, and/or incident management teams. Standard mutual aid practices should be followed.
- Warning: Individuals near the wildland fire may need to be warned of its approach, particularly if rapid growth is expected. See the [Warning Annex](#) for additional information on this function. Note that individuals in remote areas without communication may need face-to-face notifications.
- Evacuation and Shelter / Mass Care: If property or populated areas are threatened, the area may require evacuation. See the [Population Protection Annex](#) and [Shelter / Mass Care Annex](#) for additional information on these functions.
- Air Quality: Smoke from wildland fires can often create hazardous air quality conditions. Public health concerns may range from those with pre-existing health conditions to all persons. Generally, these concerns are managed through public information. See the [Public Information Annex](#) for additional information on this function.

➤ Decision Point: *A wildland fire has caused property or infrastructure losses.*

Losses should be assessed and evaluated for possible disaster and/or emergency declarations. Individuals and organizations may begin clean-up and repairs through the appropriate insurance and disaster claim processes, as applicable.

When public property is damaged, the processes outlined in the [Base Plan, Section 7.1, Finance/Administration](#) should be followed.

### **X3. Organization and Assignment of Responsibilities**

The responsibilities listed here are specific to this hazard. Note that all entities, whether listed or not, are also responsible for their basic disaster and emergency responsibilities as outlined in the [Base Plan, Section 3.2](#), as applicable.

The following entities are not specific to jurisdiction. Therefore, in an emergency, the jurisdiction(s) affected will have the responsibility for these roles, and other non-affected jurisdictions may also be involved through mutual aid.

#### **Disaster and Emergency Services**

- Notify and coordinate with Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (i.e. American Red Cross, Salvation Army, etc.) for shelter and/or mass care services.
- Assist with the management of support activities, such as sheltering and mass care.

#### **Law Enforcement**

- Secure and control access to affected areas during initial attack.
- Provide extended security and perimeter control, as negotiated and/or contracted with the Incident Commander.
- Investigate criminal activities related to the disaster (such as arson).

#### **Fire Departments / Districts**

- Provide wildland and structural fire suppression.
- Establish safe perimeters around the incident scene and deny entry to unauthorized persons.
- Investigate the cause of fires. (MCA 7-33-2001)
- Request or recommend population protection and warning activities.
- Request or recommend declarations of evacuation, emergency, and/or disaster to the local governing body, as appropriate.

#### **Public Health**

- Monitor public health conditions, including smoke conditions.
- Provide technical assistance on health and environmental risks, as necessary.

#### **Street and Road Departments**

- Provide equipment and personnel, as needed, for wildland fire suppression. (Note: these requests need to be approved by the Principal Executive Officer first.)

#### **Utility Providers**

- Be prepared to shut down services if threatened or pose an additional hazard.

### **State and Federal Firefighting Entities**

*including Montana DNRC, US Forest Service (USFS), US Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and Yellowstone National Park (YNP)*

- Provide wildland and structural fire suppression on state and federal lands.
- Coordinate with and support suppression efforts on adjacent and nearby private lands.
- In coordination with the local Public Information Officer, if established, provide information on fires located on state or federal lands.

### **Other Entities**

- Perform other duties as needed and assigned.

## **X4. Direction, Control, and Coordination**

Incident Command for wildland fire incidents will most often be managed by the Park County Fire Warden and/or the jurisdiction's fire department chief or officer. Unified Command may be used when the fire involves federal lands. If the Fire Warden, Fire Chief, or appointee is not available, the first fire department personnel to respond will be responsible for establishing Incident Command and transfer of command as appropriate. Additional information on the direction and control function can be found in the [Direction and Control Annex](#) and [Base Plan, Section 4](#).

This annex is to be used in coordination with other local, state, and federal plans. Other related state and federal plans (vertical coordination) include:

- State of Montana Disaster and Emergency Plan, Montana Interagency Wildfire Plan
- Northern Rockies Coordination Center Mobilization Guide
- Federal Fire and Aviation Operations Plan

Wildland fire specific plans for Park County (horizontal coordination) include:

- Park County Community Wildfire Protection Plan
- Initial Attack Mutual Aid Agreements – outline cooperative fire efforts between Park County and the US Forest Service, US Bureau of Land Management, the Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC), and Yellowstone National Park
- Main Boulder Evacuation Plan

## **X5. Information Collection and Dissemination**

### **X5.1 Information Collection for Planning**

Table X5.1A lists the key information needed and possible sources when preparing for and conducting operations during wildland fires.

Table X5.1A Possible Information Sources

Information Type	Source
Firefighting Resources Statuses	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Livingston / Park County 911 Center</li> <li>- Yellowstone National Park Communications Center</li> <li>- Bozeman Interagency Dispatch Center</li> <li>- Billings Interagency Dispatch Center</li> <li>- Great Falls Interagency Dispatch Center</li> </ul>
Wildland Fire Information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Incident / Unified Command</li> <li>- US Forest Service</li> <li>- US Bureau of Land Management</li> <li>- Yellowstone National Park</li> <li>- Montana DNRC</li> <li>- Inciweb</li> </ul>
Weather Forecasts and Alerts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- National Weather Service, Billings</li> </ul>

## X5.2 Public Information

Information regarding the public information function can be found in the [Public Information Annex](#).

The following information should be provided to the public, as appropriate:

- Description of current situation
- Anticipated fire growth
- Areas expected to be impacted
- Area and road closures
- Protective actions needed or recommended
- Shelter and mass care information
- Disaster recovery information

## X6. Communications

See the [Communications Annex](#) for more details on emergency communications in Park County.

## X7. Administration, Finance, and Logistics

### X7.1 Finance/Administration

For additional information on the Finance/Administration function, particularly the importance of recordkeeping, see the [Base Plan, Section 7.1](#).

## **X7.2 Logistics**

For additional information on disaster and emergency logistics, see the [Base Plan, Section 7.2](#).

## **X8. Plan Development and Maintenance**

See the [Base Plan, Section 8](#) for additional information on annex development, review, revision, and exercise.

## **X9. Authorities and References**

### **X9.1 Authorities / References**

- Montana Code Annotated 76-13-2: Provision of fire protection services
- Montana Code Annotated 76-13-212: Duty of landowner to protect against fire
- Montana Code Annotated 76-13-105: Protection of lands and improvements from fire
- Montana Code Annotated 76-13-115: State fire policy
- Montana Code Annotated 76-13-116: Duties of firewardens – liability

### **X9.2 Acronyms**

See the [Base Plan, Section 9.4](#) for the list of acronyms used in this plan.

## **X10. Attachments**

None.