7.0 IMPLEMENTATION OF PHASE III PLAN

Operational procedures for implementing the Phase III fire plan are essentially the same as for Phases I and II and have been edited only as necessary to make them apply the Phase III planning area. These operational procedures are included in **Appendix A**. These procedures result from negotiations and agreements between Moffat County and the other land-managing agencies that have responsibilities for fire control in the planning area.

The chain of events that will occur when a wildland fire breaks out are as follows. The Moffat County Sheriff's Department, which has primary responsibility for suppression of wildfires on private lands in the county, will notify the Moffat County Natural Resources Department. The Natural Resources Department will identify the landowner or landowners may be affected by the fire, the management objectives of the landowner, and the action that would best respond to those objectives. The landowner will be contacted by Moffat County, which will use the information in **Appendix J**. This information contains contact information, including phone numbers, of landowners within the Phase III planning area (**Appendix J** will not be available to the public to protect the privacy of individual landowners). Using the information in each report (**Appendix I**), the agencies will work together to review the landowner's wishes. The landowner can inform the county if the management objectives in the fire plan are not in accordance with the landowner's wishes at the time of the fire. The county will then take the appropriate actions to honor the landowner's wishes to the extent possible.

Landowners have the option to change the Fire Management Category at any time by contacting the Moffat County Natural Resources Department. Moffat County will also work with private landowners and agency personnel to identify locations for fuel reduction projects. Landowners who declined to participate or who were not interviewed may be contacted later, at the discretion of the landowner. Preferred Fire Management Categories will change as land is transferred between owners. Transfers of ownership should be communicated to the Moffat County Natural Resource Department.

8.0 SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Before European settlement, fires played a common and important role in the ecosystems of Colorado. Frequent, low-intensity fires reduced fuel loads and promoted the development of diverse vegetation and wildlife populations. With settlement in the late 1800's and early 1900's, wildland fires were negatively viewed and were increasingly controlled, resulting in unanticipated consequences. Stands of brush and timber are now much denser than they were when fires were more frequent. This situation has increased the potential for uncontrollable wildfires and decreased the productivity of plants that livestock and wildlife rely on for forage.

Many local residents have recognized these changes and want to encourage fire management agencies to allow some wildfires to burn and restore the natural vegetation of the county, while reducing fire danger and increasing forage production. The Colorado State Legislature has recently expanded counties' authority to manage wildland fires (CRS 30-11-124). This law recognizes the often-ignored benefits of wildland fire under some conditions and in some types of vegetation. It also encourages the use of fuel treatments to reduce wildfire hazards. Because of this policy, Moffat County initiated the fire management and fuel reduction process. Based on the land uses and ownership in the Phase III planning area, two types of assessments were conducted: (1) community assessments used to develop the Wildland-Urban Interface Plan; and (2) landowner interviews used to create the Landowner Plan. Through this approach, 23 communities were assessed and 519 landowners were interviewed.

SUMMARY

The Wildland-Urban Interface Plan (Chapter 5) and Landowner Plan (Chapter 6) provide the information critical for future management of wildland fire in the Phase III planning area. Summaries of each chapter are provided below.

Wildland-Urban Interface Plan

Twenty-three communities were identified based on meetings with Moffat County and other fire management agencies. Before each community was visited, a hazard rating system was developed based on a similar system used by the Colorado State Forest Service. It was, however, modified to reflect conditions that are unique to Moffat County.

The hazard rating for the majority of the communities (17 of 23) was low, while ratings for five were moderate, and the rating for one was high. Response time varies from 10 minutes for communities near Craig to 90 minutes for communities farther from Craig. Once response time was added to the hazard rating, the overall hazard rating for five communities was low, the overall rating for 16 was moderate, and the overall ratings for two were high.

The defendability and survivability of each community were assessed. Twelve of the 23 communities that were assessed are currently fully defendable, while nine are partially defendable and two are not defendable. After all recommended fuel treatments and fire services are implemented, 15 of the 23 communities will be fully defendable, and eight will be partially defendable.

New fuel treatments and fire services that would increase the defendability and survivability of each community were recommended. New fuel treatments and fire services were based on several factors. Implementation of projects will most likely be affected by the willingness of landowners to participate and the availability of funds to complete the project.

Landowner Plan

Interviews were conducted with each participating landowner whose property had the potential to contribute to effective and efficient management of fire and fuels. The opportunity to participate in this wildfire planning effort was voluntary.

For each parcel of land, topography, vegetation, land use and other fire-related data were collected and presented in a parcel report for that landowner. Additionally, the landowner selected a fire management category for each of their parcels. These selections were graphically displayed to illustrate trends and patterns within the Phase III planning area. Based on these interviews and information from agencies, it was determined that landowners, both public and private, preferred the following in the Phase III planning area:

- Suppression of fire on 320,593 acres or 21 percent of the planning area.
- Suppression of fire, but fuel reduction by mechanical or prescribed fire on 298,803 acres or 19 percent of the planning area.
- Allow wildland fire to burn or allow prescribed fire, with considerable constraints on 724,072 acres or 46 percent of the planning area.
- Allow wildland fire to burn or allow prescribed fire, with few constraints on 212,047 acres or 14 percent of the planning area.

CONCLUSION

Many of the communities in the Phase III planning area are currently defendable against wildland fire, while other communities are at some risk. Many landowners in the Phase III portion of Moffat County welcome the use of wildland fire to reduce fuel build-ups and encourage new growth. Other landowners prefer prescribed fire or other means of fuel reduction, while some prefer no fire use at all.

Phase III of the Wildland Fire and Fuels Management Plan will contribute to the goals, objectives, and mission of Moffat County with respect to wildland fire. The plan will further increase agency fire planning coordination and possibly shape management objectives on public lands. This information will be integrated into a larger, county-wide plan in an effort to create seamless wildland fire management across boundaries and increase communication between fire response agencies, meet the objectives of each landowner, and improve public and firefighter safety.

9.0 GLOSSARY

This glossary is consistent with Definition of Terms in **Appendix C** from the Phase II plan. Information was adapted from the Phase II plan (Land Stewardship Associates 2002). The Phase II plan adopted most of these terms from the Phase I report (Ecosystem Enhancement 2001). Terms used through the Moffat County planning and reporting process are included below.

Appropriate Management Response (AMR) – Specific actions taken in response to a wildland fire to implement protection and fire use objectives identified by landowners.

Disturbance – A discrete event, either natural or human-induced, that causes a change in the existing condition of an ecological system.

Energy Release Component (ERC) – An index developed through the National Fire Danger Rating System. ERC is an indicator of dryness in the fuel and is a fuel loading based rate that predicts how much energy fire will produce both from its consumption of available fuel and through its residence time. ERC and 1,000-hour time lag fuel moisture have been used in dry climates to track seasonal drying trends.

Fire Management Plan (FMP) – A strategic plan that defines a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires. The plan could be supplemented by operational plans, prescribed fire plans, hazardous fuels reduction, and prevention plans.

Fire Use – The combination of wildland fire use and prescribed fire application to meet specific resource and landowner objectives.

Fuel Treatment – Any activity programmed and contracted to reduce or change fuel loading or type on a site. Fuel treatment can be accomplished by mechanical or chemical means or fire use.

Haines Index – Lower atmosphere stability index (LASI) developed by Donald Haines. The index relies on two variables: dryness and atmospheric stability. On a scale of six, three points are given to dryness and three to the stability of the atmosphere. Both of these variables have a pronounced affect on extreme fire behavior. In the scaling, a 6 is extreme, 5 is high, 4 is moderate, while 3 to 1 are low.

Initial Attack – A suppression action taken immediately after a fire is first reported that is consistent with firefighter and public safety and the resource values to be protected.

Mitigation Actions – Those on-the-ground activities that will serve to increase the defensibility of a landowner parcel or community; check, direct, or delay the spread of fire; and minimize threats to life, property, and resources. Mitigation actions may include mechanical and physical fuel treatment, specific fire applications, and limited suppression actions. These actions will be used to construct fire lines, reduce excessive fuel concentrations, reduce vertical fuel, and create black lines.

Minimum Impact Suppression Tactics (MIST) – The concept of MIST is to minimize the suppression impacts on the landscape in a safe, timely, and effective manner consistent with ecosystem and fire management objectives.

Preparedness – Activities that lead to a safe, efficient, and cost-effective fire management program in support of landowner management objectives through appropriate planning and coordination.

Prescribed Fire – Any fire ignited by management actions to meet specific objectives. A written, approved prescribed fire plan must exist before ignition.

Prescribed Fire Plan – A plan required for each fire application ignited by management. It must be prepared by qualified personnel and approved by the appropriate agency administrator before implementation. Each plan will follow specific direction and must include critical elements and how to mitigate each element.

Prescription Guidelines – Guidelines used to show the upper and lower values of parameters for prescribed fire.

Spread Component (SC) – An index developed through the National Fire Danger Rating System. The index provides predicted rate of spread of a fire (in chains per hour) from information on local fuels and weather information collected from a local Remote Automated Weather System (RAWS) site.

Suppression Constraints – A limitation placed on suppression forces to minimize adverse effects to the environment from fire suppression activities. An example would be restricting the use of heavy equipment in certain areas.

Wildland Fire – Any nonstructural fire, other than prescribed fire, that occurs in the wildland. This term encompasses fires previously called both wildland fires and prescribed natural fires.

Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) – A progressively developed assessment and operational management plan that documents the analysis and selection of strategies and describes the appropriate management response for a wildland fire being managed for resource benefit.

Wildland Fire Situation Analysis (WFSA) – A decision-making process that evaluates alternative management strategies against selected safety, environmental, social, economic, political, and resource management objectives.

Wildland Fire Use (WFU) – The management of naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific pre-stated management objectives in predefined geographic areas outlined in Fire Management Plans.

Wilderness Study Area (WSA) – An area that are being considered for wilderness designation.

10.0 REFERENCES

Anderson, H.E. 1982. Aids to determining fuel models for estimating fire behavior. National Wildfire Coordinating Group General Technical Report INT-122.

Beckerman, Dale. 2003a. Personal communication [*Mar 20* telephone conversation with T. Schuller, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Boulder, Colorado. *RE:* U.S. Forest Service map landscape units]. Fire Management Specialist, Bureau of Land Management, Craig, Colorado.

Beckerman, Dale. 2003b. Personal communication [*Mar 20* email to T. Schuller, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Boulder, Colorado. *RE:* Bureau of Land Management wildland fire types referred to in BLM maps]. Fire Management Specialist, Bureau of Land Management, Craig, Colorado.

Beckerman, Dale. 2003c. Personal communication [*Mar 5* email to T. Schuller, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Boulder, Colorado. *RE:* Bureau of Land Management equipment and response to wildland fires]. Fire Management Specialist, Bureau of Land Management, Craig, Colorado.

Bureau of Land Management (BLM), U.S. Forest Services, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service. No date. Fire Management Plan for the Northwest Colorado Fire Management Program.

Cahur, Mark. 2003. Personal communication [*May 2* email to M. Sartorius, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Greenwood Village, Colorado. *RE:* Fire Management Categories on the Moffat County portion of the Medicine Bow-National Forest]. GIS Specialist, Medicine Bow-National Forest, Steamboat, Colorado.

Ecosystem Enhancement, LLC. 2001. Moffat County Wildland Fire and Fuel Management Plan. December.

Jantz, Sergeant Tim. 2003. Personal communication [*Mar 4* fax to T. Schuller, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Boulder, Colorado. *RE:* Moffat County Sheriff's Office equipment and response to wildland fires]. Sergeant, Moffat County Sheriff's Office, Craig, Colorado.

Johnson, Bruce. 2003. Personal communication [*Mar 7* fax to T. Schuller, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Boulder, Colorado. *RE:* Maybell Volunteer Fire Department equipment and response to wildland fires]. Former Fire Chief, Maybell Volunteer Fire Department, Craig, Colorado.

Land Stewardship Associates LLC. 2002. Moffat County Wildland Fire and Fuel Management Plan Phase II. August 30.

Mason, Roy. 2003. Personal communication [*Mar 13* telephone conversation with T. Schuller, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Boulder, Colorado. *RE:* Craig Rural Fire District equipment and response to wildland fires]. Fire Chief, Craig Rural Fire District, Craig, Colorado.

National Wildfire Coordinating Group. 2000. National Interagency Incident Management System, Wildland and Prescribed Fire Qualification System Guide. January.

Stephenson, Richard. 2003. Personal communication [*Mar 6* email to K. Mullins, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Denver, Colorado. *RE:* Conservation Reserve Program policy on burning of their acreage]. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Natural Resources Conservation District.

Rogers, Mark. 2003. Personal communication [*Jan 7* telephone conversation to K. Mullins, Greystone Environmental Consultants, Inc., Greenwood Village, Colorado. *RE:* Fire Management Categories on the Moffat County portion of the White River National Forest]. Fire Management Specialist, White River National Forest, Meeker, Colorado.

U.S. Department of Agriculture, Forest Service, Rocky Mountain Research Station, Fire Sciences Laboratory (2003, April). Fire Effects Information System. Located at http://www.fs.fed.us/database/feis/. Accessed May 2, 2003.