



BRIEFING PAPER



U.S. Forest Service
Pacific Southwest Region
Fire and Aviation Management

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Topic: Proposed Action: R5 Standardized Fuels Management Organization

Purpose for Briefing: Provide Regional leadership the final proposed action developed by R5/RO FAM towards adopting a standardized region-wide fuels management organization that is capable of operating with limited assistance from the wildfire preparedness staff. This is the final proposal after review and comment from regional leadership at all levels.

Background & Key Points: There has long been recognition and discussion of the need to standardize, or at least formalize, the approach that the Region and Forests take when staffing their Fuels Management Organizations. However, to date, there has been no formal direction regarding this matter. As a result, the approach that Forests have taken to staff the fuels program is extremely disparate, resulting in wide differences among Forests in terms of their capacity to perform, skill sets, opportunity for advancement, and predictable levels of accomplishment. It has also affected the capacity of the wildfire preparedness staff as expectations for increased outcomes has largely fallen to this staff. Other staffs such as those housed in Ecosystems Management have also been affected, particularly in the planning, surveying, and mitigations realm.

Several briefing papers and proposals have been produced since serious discussions about this issue began around the passage of the Bipartisan Infrastructure bill in late 2021. FAM/Fuels provided a BP to the FAM/BOD in November, 2021 that proposed adopting a phased approach towards one of 3 proposed standard fuels organization, with various supplemental planning and implementation support staff. Working with the RFLC, this BP was amended in July 2022 to reflect a greater 'Zone approach' in how fuels work would be carried out. Concurrently, a scientifically conducted survey looking at fuels management capacity among R5 Forests was completed, resulting in a briefing paper that was distributed to FAM and Line.

Now more than 20% of the way through the 5-year BIL funding period, this proposal outlines the final FAM proposal to appropriately staff a 'standardized' fuels organization within the greater FAM staff area. Funding for the organization will have to be secured through negotiations with the Washington Office. Following this, FAM will immediately start moving out on amend Forest organizational charts and hiring new fuels staff within the available levels of funding.

External-Internal Interest: External and internal interest in this matter is extremely high. R5 is under pressure to meet agreed upon outcomes arising from several MOUs and the California Wildfire and

Forest Resilience Taskforce Action Plan. Internally, the Region is tasked with meeting fuels management outcomes pertaining to the 10-Year Wildfire Crisis strategy.

Recommendations, Options: The final proposal FAM makes in this is a modified version of the 'high' option originally proposed in the 11/21 briefing paper. It incorporates the need to address the 'Zone' concept, bolster staff in the most critical positions, and ensure that support is provided from concept to implementation to reporting. The intent is to bolster fuels management positions to the point that they are capable of completing routine fuels program work within their organizational capability. These positions will create additional capacity, assist with work life balance, and allow the Preparedness program to move into an assistance function, decreasing the overall stress on both.

Overview

To meet the capacity need that will translate into efficient and successful fuels management outcomes, the final FAM proposal is as follows:

1. Expand staffing at the Forest and District/Zone level to ensure that all levels of planning and implementation are properly addressed.
 - a. All Forests to hire a dedicated Forest Fuels Program Manager, District Fuels Planner, District Fuels Officer, and a District Fuels Technician. Hiring a Fire Ecologist at Forest/Zone level will be decided at the local level.
 - b. All Forests to hire a dedicated Unit/District 10-person Fuels Module and Heavy Equipment Module.
2. Expand staffing at the Regional Office to assist the Forest workload and ensure budget, reporting, and implementation is completed within expectations. Regional positions will be staffed out depending on workload needs
 - a. Region to hire up to two Fuels Branch Chiefs whose work will be focused on the hybrid Zone level – North and South Fuels.
 - b. Region to hire up to two additional sub staff under the Branch Chief (Operations and Program Coordinator).
 - c. Region to hire and manage support staff (Bio, Arch, etc) at each Zone, up to 6 additional staff per Zone.

Upon approval of this Standardized Fuels Organization proposal, Forests will immediately move to align their fuels management organization to the structure outlined in this document. Any deviation from this structure will be negotiated with Regional FAM/Line staff. This proposal reflects the maximum potential organizational structure. Forests/Zones/Region may choose to hire fewer staff than is reflected in this proposal depending upon locally determined need.

The strategy to hire these positions will be multi-faceted. First, the availability of funding will be negotiated with the WO. From this, the Region will know the extent to which this proposal may be hired to. Following that, a phased hiring strategy will be developed with the RO and Zones that addresses the most pressing capacity needs of the field. Targeted hiring of those positions will begin as soon as possible within the hiring calendar. The first phase will be to hire as many field-based positions allowable within the hiring calendar in capacity-critical positions. The first phase of RO hiring will begin with one Branch Chief, one additional Fuels Operations staff, and a subset of Zone support positions. The second phase will follow the hiring calendar to fill out other positions within the proposed organizational chart. Second phase RO hiring will be contingent upon need and workloads

that emerge from accelerated fuels accomplishments. Third phase will be focused on filling gaps missed in the first two phases and filling attrited positions.

We believe that this proposal will work because:

1. It addresses all layers and needs of the Fuels organization.
2. It meets the needs of the Region, the Zones, the Forests, and the Districts.
3. It allows for Zone-focused work to occur while retaining a level of independence that will assist with competing priorities and resource allocation decisions.
4. It addresses the most limiting factor to getting more fuels work done – capacity at the field level.

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Table 1. Narrative description of the R5 FAM Fuels Management Organization Proposal

R5 Hybrid Regional/Zonal/Forest Fuels Organization <i>Primary Proposal</i>			Justification	RO FAM Fuels	Zone/ Unit
Position	Grade	Duties	Rationale of Need	# staff	# staff
Regional Fuels AD FS2180 FS2381	14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervises Fuels/Air Regional and Zonal AD staff area. Coordinates and liaisons at the Regional Office with other FAM-AD staffs as well as Ecosystems, Budget, PPS, etc. Ensures that Fuels Management resources (staff, funding) are being used to the fullest potential Supervises the Regional Fire Ecologist, two Regional Fire Planners, the Fuels Business coordinator, and the Air Quality Program Manager. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This position defines a clear line of authority from the DRF/SPF and FAM Director through the Regional fuels substaff dispersed through the Zones and into the Forests. Moving the AD position to a full GS-14 sets the tone for a comprehensive standardized fuels organization and is commensurate with how the workload is distributed in other Regions. 	1	
RO Fuels Branch Chief (North/South) FS6503	13	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervised by Regional Fuels AD. Supervise the Regionally managed zone-oriented fuels organization: N. Zone Fuels Operations, N Zone Fuels Coordinator, and Support Staff as determined. Assist Forests in developing recruitment, retention, and training programs, including underutilized or underleveraged hiring options. Works with the Zones to prioritize projects. Allocates non-preparedness resources to meet prioritized needs within their two Zones. Is the principal liaison between the Zones and Regional Budget. Collaborates and identifies opportunities with partners. Ensures that FACTS tabular/spatial fuels accomplishments meet business rule timelines (planning and tracking). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> These new positions are needed to reduce the span of control for the Fuels AD. The Branch Chiefs will allow their respective Zones to have a central POC for all fuels related matters and will allow for impartial arbitration of prioritization and allocation decisions. This position will allow for high-level program development and long-term visioning within their Zones. It will ensure consistency of action and prioritization across Forests. 	Up to 2	

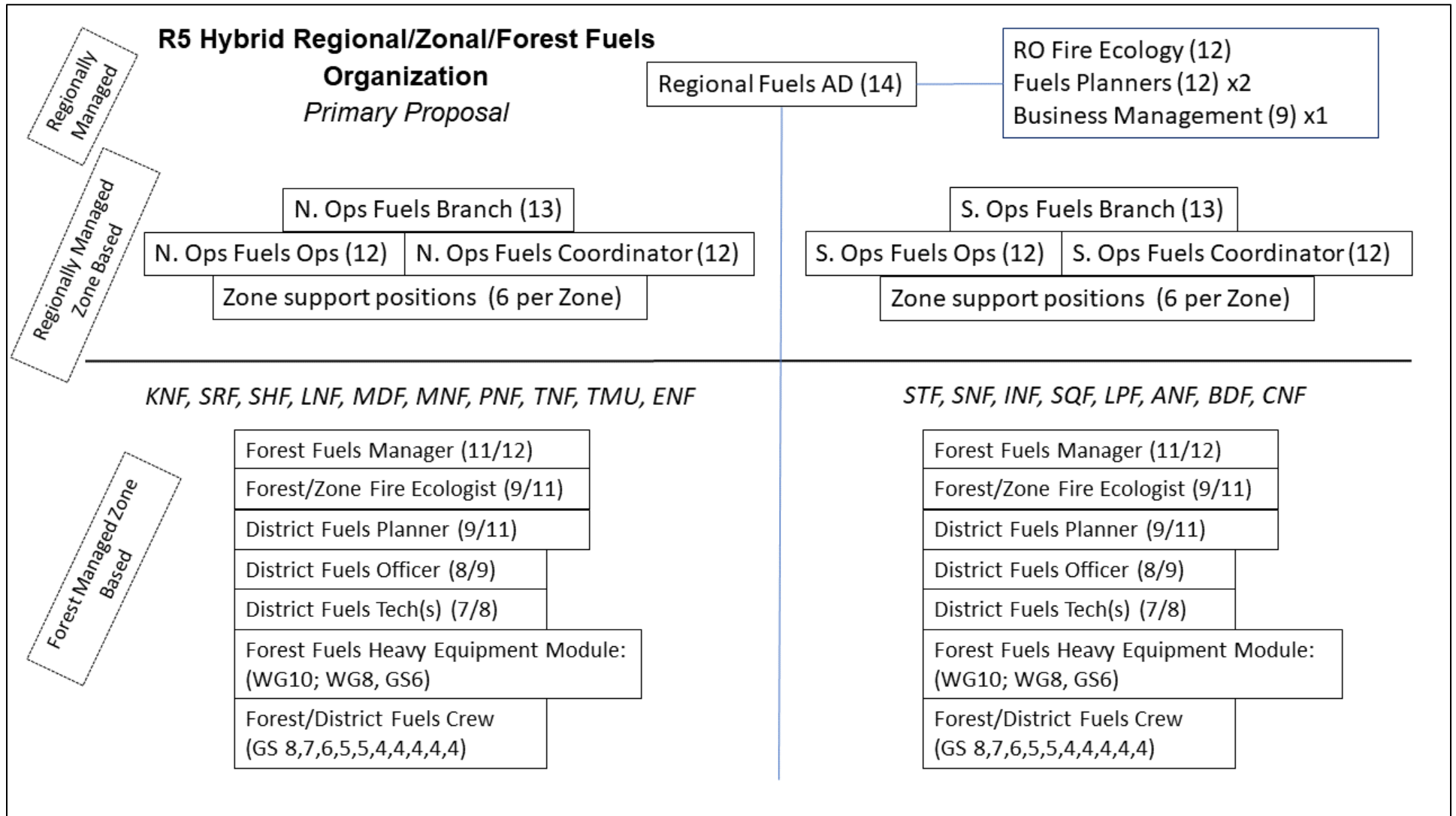
<p>RO Fuels Operations (North/South)</p> <p>FS3043</p>	<p>12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Provides technical assistance to Forests in pursuit of maximizing fuels management outcomes. Serves as SME for fuels management implementation activities. Liaisons with the WO on fuels related initiatives. Provides training to advance the fuels management organization. Assists in Regional level taskings as needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes the existing duties of the Regional Fuels Operations and allows for greater focus and attention to address technical issues within their hybrid zone (north/south). Will increase the level of service as overall fuels activities increase. As the overall workload increases, we anticipate that technical/SME needs will increase. This position will allow for Regional support, coordination, and quality assurance. 	<p>Up to 2</p>	
<p>RO Fuels Coordinator (North/South)</p> <p>FS3043</p>	<p>12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Principal coordinator within the Zone for POW development and budget execution. Accountability for quarterly and annual accomplishments. Works with the Zone Forests to ensure that reporting is being completed within business rule guidelines. Assists in data calls and reply dues for planned and accomplished fuels treatment work. Ensures that FACTS reporting is completed in a timely and complete manner. Serves as a technical expert in POW, budget, trust funds Accounts for collection and execution of trust funds (BD) within the Zones. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes the existing duties of the Regional Fuels Coordinator and allows for greater focus and attention to address program related issues within their hybrid zone (north/south). Will increase the level of service as overall fuels activities increase. As the overall workload increases, we anticipate that POW and reporting needs will increase. This position will allow for Regional support, coordination, and quality assurance. 	<p>Up to 2</p>	
<p>Zone Support Positions</p> <p>Various PD's</p>	<p>Mix of 9 & 11</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 6 support positions to be determined by the Zone Forests. Supervised by the Fuels Branch Chief. Intended to meet the local needs of the Forests within the Zone. Able to be adjusted through time and need. Anticipated a mixture of NTE and FTE positions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support positions are needed to complete fuels planning as well as fuels project mitigation and survey work. We suggest operating these positions at the Zone level, supervised by the Zone Fuels Branch Chief and/or their substaff. These positions will supplement Forest resource staff and be allocated to the highest priority projects as well as those with the most potential value. 		<p>Up to 6 each Zone,</p>
<p>Forest Fuels Program Manager</p> <p>FS4508/4509</p>	<p>11/12</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervised by FFMO. Is the principal POC for the Forest between the Zone/Regional organization. Ensures overall quality and efficiency for the Forest Fuels Program. Represents the Forest at Regional/National meetings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Takes the existing workload of Forest level fuels managers and separates their duties out from Preparedness in order to focus entirely on the fuels program. 		<p>Each Forest</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allocates Forest-level resources to ensure maximum outputs and outcomes for the fuels program. Coordinates with local partners and seeks to expand future opportunities. • Supervises the Forest budget allocation, develops long term program needs, sets intent and direction for the program. • Conducts training and educational programs. Works to address barriers in recruitment and retention. • Conducts quality assurance reviews. Conducts Technical Review of burn plans and contract documents. • Ensures that all Forest and District level report • Integration between the forest and Zone Fuels Leadership. Responsible for 5 year Implementation and 10 Year strategy plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This position is critical to the overall operations of the Forest fuels program. It is the principal liaison between the Districts, Zones, and Regional staff and ensures that all Forest-level programmatic work is being accomplished to standard. 		
Forest/Zone Fire Ecologist FS4728/ FS4729	9/11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaisons between academia and managers to forward science based management solutions. • Conducts monitoring, reporting, and associated activities. • Current work as planned 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This position exists on several Forests and needs to be represented in this organizational chart. • Expansion of fire ecologists as deemed necessary or desired by Forests/Zones 		
District Fuels Planner Supervisory FS4496 Non-Supervisory FS4494/FS4493 Or Prescribed Fire & Fuels Supervisory FC5424/FC0274	9/11 401 series	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Has overall responsibility for ensuring that NEPA, RX plans and other planning related efforts are being addressed at the District level. Works on additional funding opportunities. • Coordinates Forest level work the Forest Fuels Program Manager. Participates as the IDT leader in fuels management project. • Ensures that FACTS and other required reporting is completed at the District level • Coordinates with Air Pollution Control Districts. Ensures overall quality control of projects on the District. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This position is needed to separate the workload of planning and implementation at the District level, which is too much for one person to be successful at. A GS11 fuels planner is an equitable position to all others within Interdisciplinary Teams, which has been a traditional mismatch. • In order to increase fuels outputs, the pipeline of viable and strategic NEPA needs to be strengthened. Currently, few Forests employ dedicated fuels planners. • This position will ensure that NEPA is well constructed, that burn plans follow the purpose and needs, and that monitoring meets the intent of planning so that the accountability loop can be closed. 		Each District

<p>District Fuels Officer</p> <p>Non Supervisory FS0867</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Supervisory FC0867</p>	<p>8/9</p> <p>0462 series</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for fuels project implementation and monitoring. Coordinates equipment use, scheduling prescribed fire projects, prescribed fire preparatory actions. May supervise the Fuels tech and fuels modules. Serves as primary COR for contracts. PI for Grants and Agreements. Serves as primary burn boss and coordinates with other burn bosses to accomplish concurrent burning. Implements monitoring plans. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District Fuels Officers are critical to administer the overall implementation of work on the District. They are the bridge between planning and implementation. This proposal seeks to shift the work of GS9 Fuels Officers away from planning, where they often spend most of their time, to full time implementation work. This will greatly expand the amount of work that gets done on the ground, especially when working with force multipliers such as Techs, Equipment Modules, and Fuels Modules 		<p>Each District</p>
<p>District Fuels Tech</p> <p>1CF003 FS2014</p>	<p>07/08</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responsible for fuels monitoring, fuels sampling, post fire monitoring, and project mitigation compliance. Conducts project layout, serves as an assistant COR for high/mod complexity projects and COR for low complexity. Provides additional capacity to the GS-9 in all implementation taskings. Serves as prescribed fire burn boss on Type 3 burns. Helps to coordinate prescribed fire preparatory actions. Coordinates contingency resources and serves as overhead on prescribed fires. Assists with coordinating work for the fuels module as well as severity and preparedness resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> District fuels techs serve in multiple roles and are critical to ensure continuity of on the ground fuels reduction activities year round. They serve as PIs or COR 3's for low cost contracts and provide redundant oversight with the Fuels Officer to ensure 7 day a week coverage when contract and grant work is occurring on the District. Critical to coordinate extra capacity and monitoring projects. They are the eyes and ears of the ground-level work. 		<p>Each District</p>
<p>Forest Fuels Equipment Module</p> <p>FS2026 FS2025 FS6580</p>	<p>WG10, WG8, GS6</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilizes mechanical force account equipment to complete fuels reduction activities. Assists prescribed fire line preparation. Serves as heavy equipment contingency resource for prescribed fires. Uses masticators, bulldozers, chippers, or other specialized equipment to reduce hazardous fuels. Used to construct or reconstruct machine piles, particularly in areas with high snag hazards or on steep slopes, or in areas where suppression repair has occurred. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Needed to expand and support the use of year-round mechanical fuels work. From a salary to cost perspective, heavy equipment modules tend to be extremely efficient. They are able to work year round and adjust to the PAL level restrictions much easier than contractors. The use of heavy equipment can be much safer than hand work in areas of snag hazards and on steep slopes. Costs related to contracts are much higher than force account mechanical reduction. This module will greatly expand the use of mechanical reduction, preparation, and contingency needs. 		<p>Each Forest/District</p>

<p>Forest/ District Fuels Crew PD's TBD</p>	<p>8,7, 6, 5,5,4,4, 4,4,4</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implements District fuels projects throughout the entire year. Conducts burn prep actions. Conducts mechanical fuels reduction projects. Conducts monitoring actions. • Serves as primary burn overhead on prescribed fire projects. • Serves as Project Inspector on contracts and G&A projects. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needed to boost force account capacity and assist with numerous program tasks. • Phased approach in hiring with 1 fuels crew per Forest, moving towards full implementation as available. 		<p>Each Forest/ District</p>
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Figure 1. Visualization of the R5 FAM Fuels Management Organization Proposal.



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