

OCTOBER 2010 CROW TRIBAL LEGISLATURE

JOINT ACTION RESOLUTION NO. JAR10-16

INTRODUCED BY CEDRIC BLACK EAGLE, CHAIRMAN
CROW TRIBAL EXECUTIVE BRANCH

A JOINT ACTION RESOLUTION OF THE CROW TRIBAL LEGISLATURE AND THE
CROW TRIBAL EXECUTIVE BRANCH ENTITLED:

**“APPROVAL OF THE 2010-2024 CROW INDIAN RESERVATION FIRE
MANAGEMENT PLAN”**

WHEREAS, management of prescribed and unplanned wildland fire on the Crow Reservation is of vital interest to the Crow Tribe and members of the Tribe; and

WHEREAS, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, as part of its responsibility in managing the Reservation forest resource, has reviewed the current plan and, with Tribal input, updated the plan to reflect current information; and

WHEREAS, the 2010-2024 Crow Indian Reservation Fire Management Plan prepared by the Bureau of Indian Affairs specifically provides that the plan can be revised annually with updated management and policy direction; and

WHEREAS, the Executive Branch has the authority and responsibility pursuant to the “enumerated powers” in Article IV, Section 3(a) of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Crow Tribe to “represent the Crow Tribe of Indians in negotiations with Federal, State and local governments and other agencies, corporations, associations, or individuals in matters of welfare, education, recreation, social services, and economic development affecting the Crow Tribe of Indians,” and in Section 3(f) to “negotiate and approve or prevent any sale, disposition, lease or encumbrance of Tribal lands, interests in lands or other Tribal assets, including buffalo, minerals, gas and oil with final approval granted by the Legislative Branch;” and

WHEREAS, the Legislative Branch has authority and responsibility pursuant to Article V, Section 2(d) of the Constitution “to grant final approval or disapproval of items negotiated by the Executive Branch of Government pertinent to the sale, disposition, lease or encumbrance of Tribal lands, interests in lands or mineral assets provided that a process for such approval or disapproval may be established by legislation;”

WHEREAS, the Crow Tribe wishes to protect the natural resources and the interests of the Tribe;

NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE LEGISLATURE AND THE EXECUTIVE BRANCH OF THE CROW TRIBE:

Section 1. That the Legislative and Executive Branches of the Crow Tribe hereby approve the attached 2010-2024 Crow Indian Reservation Fire Management Plan for the Crow Reservation; and

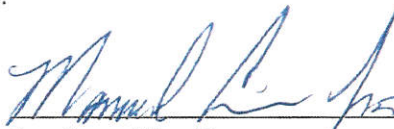
Section 2. That the Executive Branch is authorized to execute and implement the Fire Management Plan; and

Section 3. That the Legislative and Executive Branches of the Crow Tribe hereby reserves the authority to review and make modifications to the plan as economic circumstances and changing needs require; and

Section 4. It is the Legislative and Executive Branches of the Crow Tribe's intent to work with the Bureau of Indian Affairs to refine the Plan to incorporate full consideration of Tribal priorities and objectives, including possible revisions to take effect prior to the 2011 fire season.

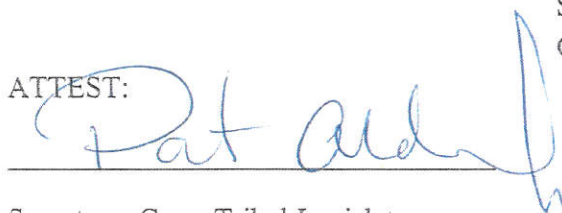
CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this Joint Action “**APPROVAL OF THE 2010-2024 CROW INDIAN RESERVATION FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN**” was duly approved by the Crow Tribal Legislature with a vote of 10 in favor, 6 opposed, and 2 abstained and that a quorum was present on this 13th day of October, 2010.



Speaker of the House
Crow Tribal Legislature

ATTEST:



Secretary, Crow Tribal Legislature



EXECUTIVE ACTION

I hereby

X approve,

_____ veto

this Joint Action Resolution granting “**APPROVAL OF THE 2010-2024 CROW INDIAN RESERVATION FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN**” pursuant to the authority vested in the Chairman of the Crow Tribe by Article V, Section 8 of the Constitution and Bylaws of the Crow Tribe of Indians on this 5 day of November, 2010.



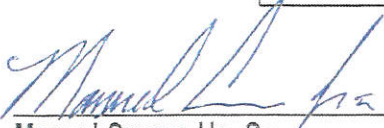
Chairman, Executive Branch
Crow Tribe of Indians

A JOINT ACTION RESOLUTION OF THE CROW TRIBAL LEGISLATURE AND THE CROW TRIBAL EXECUTIVE BRANCH ENTITLED: "APPROVAL OF THE 2010-2024 CROW INDIAN RESERVATION FIRE MANAGEMENT PLAN"

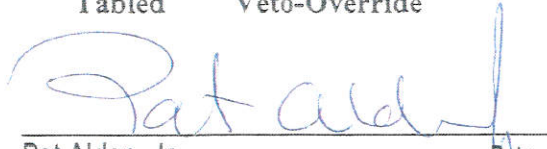
Bill or Resolution: JAR10-16 Introduced by: Executive Branch Date of Vote: 10/13/2010
 Number

<u>Representative:</u>	Yes	No	Abstained
H. Two Leggins	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
V. Pretty Paint	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C. J. Stewart	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
K. Shane	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
S. Backbone	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
O. Half, Jr.	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>
W. Plainfeather	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
R. Old Crow, Sr.	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
M. Not Afraid	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
V. Crooked Arm	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
L. DeCrane	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C. Goes Ahead	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
B. Hugs	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
G. Real Bird, Jr.	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
M. Backbone	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
D. Wilson	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>
P. Alden, Jr. <i>Secretary of the House</i>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> X </u>
M. Covers Up, Sr. <i>Speaker of the House</i>	<u> X </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
Totals:	<u> 10 </u>	<u> 6 </u>	<u> 2 </u>

Result of Vote: Passed Not Passed Tabled Veto-Override



Manuel Covers Up, Sr.
Speaker of the House



Pat Alden, Jr.
Secretary of the House

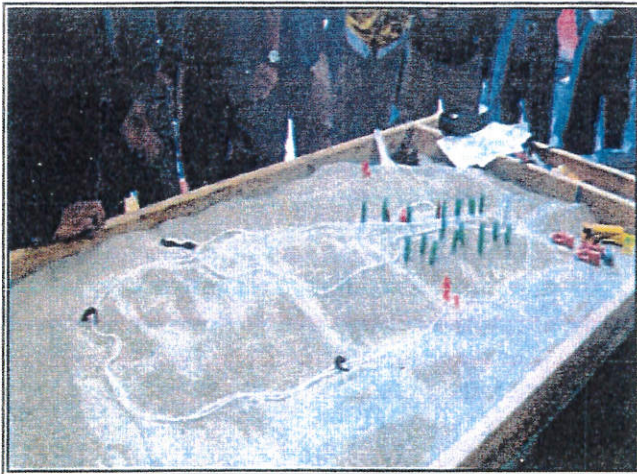
_____ Date

_____ Date

Bureau of Indian Affairs, Crow Agency Fire & Aviation Management



Fire Management Plan 2010-2024



**Fire Management Plan
Approval**

Bureau of Indian Affairs, Crow Agency, Crow Agency, Montana

Prepared By:  10.04.10
Dale Glenmore, Fire Management Officer Date

Approval Recommended by: _____
Frank Merchant – Acting Superintendent Date

Crow Tribe, Crow Agency, Montana

Approved by: _____
Cedric Black Eagle – Tribal Chairman Date

Bureau of Indian Affairs, Rocky Mountain Regional Office, Billings, Montana

Approval Recommended by: _____
Caleb Cain – Supervisory Forester Date

Approved by: _____
Edward Parisian – Regional Director Date

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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose

A Fire Management Plan (FMP) is a strategic plan that describes how a program will manage planned/unplanned wildland fire and prevention mitigation. While implementing fire management principles and using the best available science, this program intends to implement a full range of fire management activities to accomplish resource management objectives, including interrelated ecological, economic, and social components, and to achieve ecosystem sustainability. This plan can be revised annually with updated management and policy direction.

In addition this plan will promote the Bureau of Indian Affairs' mission statement which is to enhance the quality of life, to promote economic opportunity, and to carry out the responsibility to protect and improve the trust assets of American Indians, Indian tribes and Alaska Natives. This will be accomplished through the implementation of this plan.

1.1.1 Description of Area

The largest reservation in Montana, the Crow Indian Reservation, is located on the Great Plains physiographic province. It lies mostly in Big Horn County in south central Montana, bordered by Wyoming to the south. The reservation is approximately 60 miles wide by 40 miles long, and encompasses approximately 2,226,000 acres, of which 1,491,569 are held in trust by the federal government. The area ranges from mountains to plains. High lands consist of the Wolf Mountains to the east and the Big Horn and Pryor Mountains to the south with altitudes ranging from 4500 feet to 9000 feet. Sloping down northward from the mountains is rolling upland plains, which make up most of the reservation, and vary in altitude from 3,000 feet to 4,500 feet. Alluvial low lands are located along the Big Horn River, Little Big Horn River, and Pryor Creek drainage systems.

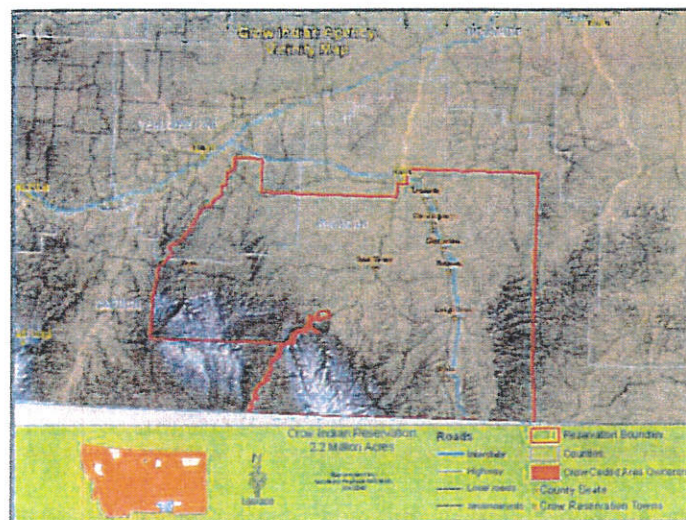


Figure 1 – Vicinity Map

1.1.2 Land Ownership

Crow Indian Reservation land ownership is intermingled consisting of tribal, allotted, and deeded tracts, commonly described as checkerboard. Also included within the reservation are Little Bighorn Battlefield National Monument and Bighorn Canyon National Recreation Area, which are administered by the National Park Service (NPS). Adding to the complexity, Little Bighorn Battlefield is administered by the Yellowstone National Park and Bighorn Canyon is administered by Grand Teton National Park.

Though the majority of the reservation lies in Big Horn County, three other Montana counties and one Wyoming county fall partially within the Reservation boundaries. Reservation lands also include small portions of Carbon, Treasure, and Yellowstone Counties in Montana, and Sheridan County in Wyoming. This unique land ownership and composition complicates the strategic planning of managing wildland fire operations for the Crow Tribe.

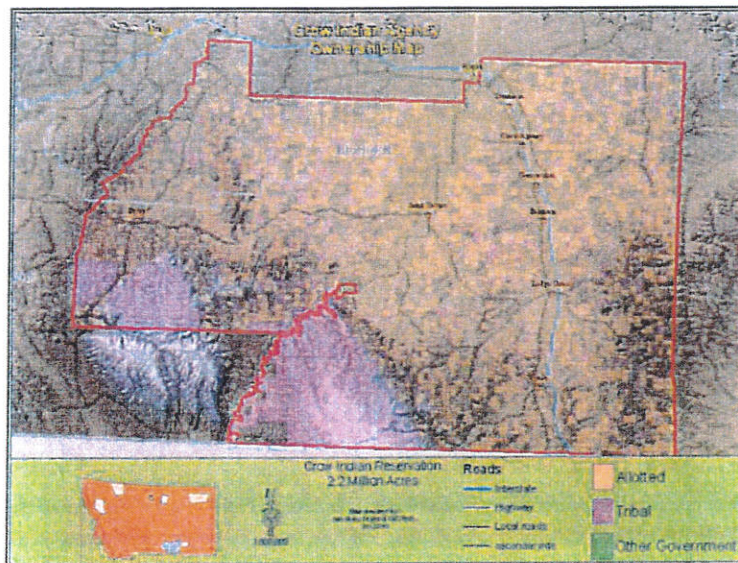


Figure 2 – Land Ownership Map

1.1.3 Resources

The Crow Indian Reservation has a diversity of natural resources ranging from timber, rangeland, agriculture, water resources, coal, oil, and newly developing natural gas in the form of coalbed methane. These resources may be impacted by the effects of wildland fire. The significant resources of timber, rangeland, agriculture and watersheds are those that have immediate potentially adverse effects from wildland fire.

1.1.4 Timber Harvest

Please refer to the latest (2009-2024) approved 15-year Forest Management Plan for a more detailed description of timber harvest activity on the Crow Indian Reservation.

1.1.5 Cultural and Religious Areas

Cultural and religious resources on the Crow Indian Reservation encompass a wide range of tangible and intangible resources that not only include the standard definitions of archaeological and historical sites, but also sites and areas of broader cultural significance. The Wolf, Bighorn and Pryor Mountain ranges remain culturally and spiritually important to the Crow Tribe. These areas continue to be used for fasting, purification and Sundance purposes. Plant and berry gathering along with wild game harvesting are continued practices in these areas. The utilization of lodgepole pine for tepee poles in the Pryor Mountains has occurred for generations. The Crow Tribe has chosen minimal development for the Bighorn Mountains, which have been designated a cultural and recreational reserve.

CHAPTER 2 – POLICY, LAND MANAGEMENT and PARTNERSHIPS

2.1 Fire Policy

Federal wildland fire policy requires that every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved Fire Management Plan. The following Federal regulations and policies provide guidance and direction for creation and scope of this FMP.

2.1.1 Code of Federal Regulations (25 CFR), 163.28 Fire Management Measures

The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) is an annual codification of the general and permanent rules published in the Federal Register by the executive departments and agencies of the Federal Government. CFR 163.28 Fire Management Measures specifically states:

- (a) The Secretary is authorized to maintain facilities and staff, hire temporary labor, rent firefighting equipment, purchase tools and supplies, and pay for their transportation as needed, to maintain an adequate level of readiness to meet normal wildfire protection needs and extinguish forest or range fires on Indian land. No expenses for fighting a fire outside Indian lands may be incurred unless the fire threatens Indian land or unless the expenses are incurred pursuant to an approved cooperative agreement with another protection agency. The rates of pay for fire fighters and for equipment rental shall be the rates for firefighting services that are currently in use by public and private wildfire protection agencies adjacent to Indian reservations on which a fire occurs, unless there are in effect at the time different rates that have been approved by the Secretary. The Secretary may also enter into reciprocal agreements with any fire organization maintaining protection facilities in the vicinity of Indian reservations or other Indian land for mutual aid in wildfire protection. This section does not apply to the rendering of emergency aid, or agreements for mutual aid in fire protection pursuant to the Act of May 27, 1955 (69 Stat. 66).
- (b) The Secretary is authorized to conduct a wildfire prevention program to reduce the number of person-caused fires and prevent damage to natural resources on Indian land.
- (c) The Secretary is authorized to expend funds for emergency rehabilitation measures needed to stabilize soil and watershed on Indian land damaged by wildfire.
- (d) Upon consultation with the beneficial Indian owners, the Secretary may use fire as a management tool on Indian land to achieve land and/or resource management objectives.

2.1.2 Departmental Manual (DM)

The DM Part 620 Wildland Fire Management, Chapter 1 General Policy and procedures states the Secretary of the Interior, through the Directors of the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), National Park Service (NPS) and the Deputy Commissioner of Indian Affairs (BIA) is responsible for wildland fire management activities of the Department (including such activities when contracted for, in whole or in part, with other agencies or Tribes) under the statutes cited in 620 DM 1.1.

The objectives of the wildland fire management program in the Department of the Interior are to:

- (a) Provide for firefighter and public safety in every fire management activity.
- (b) Make full use of wildland fire, management responses, and prescribed fire both as a natural process and as a tool that incorporates the role of wildland fire as an essential ecological process and natural change agent into the planning process. Fire may also be used as a tool to maintain and restore cultural landscapes or to dispose of vegetation and debris.
- (c) Develop fire management plans, programs, and activities which are based on the best available science; that incorporate public health and environmental quality considerations; and support bureau land, natural and cultural resource management goals and objectives.
- (d) Ensure economically viable fire management programs and activities are based on values to be protected; cost effectiveness; risk management; and land, natural, and cultural resource management objectives.
- (e) Initiate and maintain full international, Federal, Tribal, State, and local interagency coordination, with the involvement of all parties, to insure cooperation, and collaboration.
- (f) Standardize policies and procedures among Federal agencies and Tribes.
- (g) In cooperation with other wildland fire management agencies, develop and implement prevention strategies at the local, regional and national levels.

2.1.3 Indian Affairs Manual (IAM)

In accordance with the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Indian Affairs Manual (IAM), Part 90, Chapter 1 & 2, the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy requires that every area with burnable vegetation must have an approved Fire Management Plan, which has been developed utilizing a National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), and Endangered Species Act (ESA) compliant process. In addition, the BIA Wildland Fire and Aviation Program Management and Operations Guide, commonly referred to as the "blue" book, reiterate the requirement for an FMP and authorize the use of the 2007 Interagency Fire Management Template, updated in 2009. This allows for agencies to develop a collaborative approach in developing an interagency FMP.

2.1.4 National Fire Plan

The National Fire Plan (NFP) was developed in August 2000, following a landmark wildland fire season, with the intent of actively responding to severe wildland fires and their impacts to communities while ensuring sufficient firefighting capacity for the future. The NFP addresses five key points:

- (a) **Firefighting** Assuring that necessary firefighting resources and personnel are available to respond to wildland fires that threaten lives and property.
- (b) **Rehabilitation** Conducting emergency stabilization and rehabilitation activities on landscapes and communities affected by wildland fire.
- (c) **Hazardous Fuels Reduction** Reducing hazardous fuels (dry brush and trees that have accumulated and increase the likelihood of unusually large fires) in the country's forests and rangelands.
- (d) **Community Assistance** Providing assistance to communities that have been or may be threatened by wildland fire.
- (e) **Accountability** Committing to the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, an interagency team created to set and maintain high standards for wildland fire management on public lands.

2.1.5 Healthy Forest Initiative

The Healthy Forests Initiative (HFI) was launched in August 2002 by President Bush with the intent to reduce the risks severe wildfires pose to people, communities, and the environment. By protecting forests, woodlands, shrublands, and grasslands from unnaturally intensive and destructive fires, HFI helps improve the condition of our public lands, increases firefighter safety, and conserves landscape attributes valued by society.

2.1.6 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy

The Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy was developed in 1995, and was further evaluated and updated in a 2001 Review. The 2001 review found the 1995 policy generally sound and found no fundamental flaws.

2.1.7 Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993

The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) established the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) of 1993. This act provides for the establishment of strategic planning and performance measurement in the Federal Government. The strategic goal for Wildland Fire Management is to conduct fire management practices on Trust lands consistent with Federal Wildland Fire Policy.

2.2 Land/Resource Management Planning (LMP)

The dynamics of wildland fire on the landscape and on ecological environments have varied throughout history. As scientific understanding has grown of the consequences of alternative options in land management, various regulations and policy have been established and implemented. This FMP relies upon or incorporates the most recent and current approved habitat, resource, forest and other land management planning documents.

In 2003 the 107th Congress mandated the use of Fire Planning Analysis (FPA). The purpose of the FPA system is to provide managers with a common interagency process for fire management planning and budgeting, to evaluate the effectiveness of alternative fire management strategies through time, in order to meet land management goals and objectives. FPA reflects fire objectives and performance measures for the full scope of fire management activities on a larger geographical level.

2.2.1 Crow Indian Agency, Forest Management Plan (2009-2024)

The 2009-2024 Crow Indian Agency Forest Management Plan has specific goals and management objectives relevant to fire management:

- (a) To give priority to timber management activities in bark beetle infested or high risk stands.
- (b) To protect the reservation from insects and disease in forested areas under timber management (Wolf and Pryor Mountains) and from unplanned wildfire in all areas.
- (c) To enhance wildlife habitat through timber harvesting and prescribed fire.
- (d) Minimize impacts to watersheds by controlling management activities near streams.

The Plan's chosen alternative directs the agency fuels program to perform hazardous fuels reduction projects consisting of prescribed fire and fuel breaks (and in places, precommercial thinning) in the three Reservation mountain ranges.

2.3 Partnerships

As a result of the FPA process, development of this FMP allowed for an interagency approach in assessing land management strategies and objectives. The extensive work that has been conducted in the FPA process is an anticipated outcome on how successful land managers can coordinate across administrative boundaries. This plan was developed as a collaborative effort by agency Fire and Aviation Management, Forestry, Regional Office staff and Crow Tribe Executive and Legislative Branches. An interdisciplinary (ID) team approach was utilized to ensure all disciplines associated with wildland fire are represented.

2.3.1 Montana Cooperative Fire Protection Agreement, and Statewide Annual Operating Plan.

An annually updated operating plan specifies details of the cooperative fire protection agreement between the State of Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation, USDA Forest Service Northern Region, Bureau of Land Management Montana/Dakotas State Office, National Park Service Intermountain Region, Fish and Wildlife Service Mountain-Prairie Region, and BIA Rocky Mountain Region.

CHAPTER 3 – FIRE MANAGEMENT UNIT CHARACTERISTICS

3.1 Area-Wide Management Considerations

In 2005 Crow Agency became an interagency partner in the FPA process for the Billings Fire Planning Unit (FPU), commonly referred to as the Billings zone. Signature authority on the FPU Charter included the United States Forest Service (USFS), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and Department of Natural Resource and Conservation (DNRC). The purpose of creating FPA Fire Planning Units is to support and contribute to the development of landscape scale interagency fire planning and budgeting to meet the intent of the National Fire Plan, Federal Wildland Fire Policy, 10 Year Implementation Plan, and other related documents, as well as direction provided by Congress and OMB in the FY2003 appropriations language. This will be accomplished through:

- (a) Providing subject matter expertise to be incorporated into FPU design and function.
- (b) Developing data sets that address all participating agency needs.
- (c) Conducting test analyses to ensure reasonable results.
- (d) Ensure consistent application of FPA business rules that affect analysis outcomes.
- (e) Provide defined roles and responsibilities for all levels of participating personnel from line officers to personnel in supporting disciplines.
- (f) Ensure timely completion of analysis to meet required planning and budget submission deadlines.
- (g) Ensure consistent implementation is coordinated by all participating agencies.

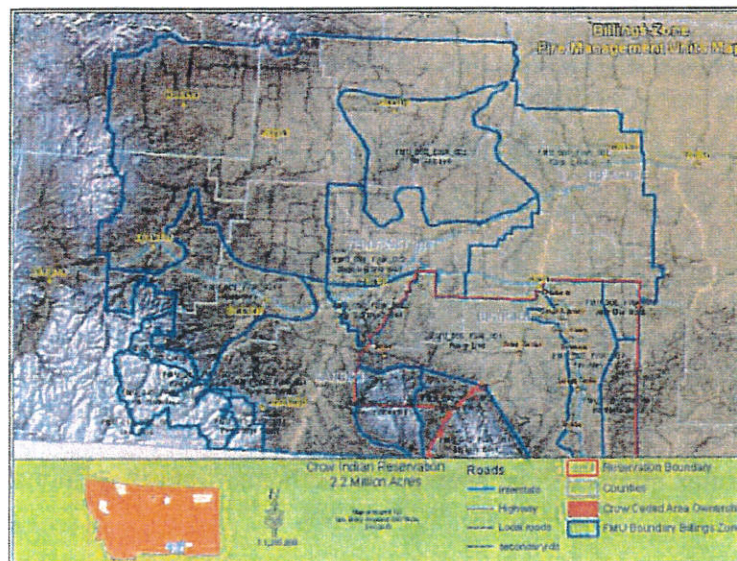


Figure 3- Billings Zone Fire Management Unit(s) Map

As the policy and the ecological dynamics of wildland fire have evolved, the nation's "mega-fires" of the 2000's have also changed the way managers respond to fires. Recognized departures from historical forest conditions have and may continue to contribute greater burning intensities than historically experienced. If land management is to bring many of these forest stands into ecological Condition Class regulation, replicating pre-settlement patterns (as desired by the Crow Reservation 2009 Forest Management Plan), it will be done using wildland fire for resource benefit, prescribed fire, mechanical treatments, or any of their combination (see Appendix A for a fire regime condition class map of the Reservation). The forest and range environments of the Crow Reservation are fire-dependent ecosystems, which have evolved in association with fire, and will lose their character, vigor, and faunal and floral diversity if fire is excluded.

The key to effective management is going to involve fire damage risk assessments, and mitigations to keep fire intensities manageable and fire effects within policy limits. In other words, managers will fully suppress the fires that threaten the greatest values at risk, but will let certain fires play their ecological role when fire is predicted to stay within planned prescriptions. The Crow fuels program will program some areas for multiple fire entries using different fire intensity levels, while other areas may require mechanical treatments to provide immediate regulation of risk, due to surrounding values at risk.

Existing Fire Planning Analysis FMUs relate more to broad response areas rather than to vegetation types that are tied to historical fire behavior. Priority areas within the FMUs reflect potential fire behavior and the target conditions that management actions will attempt to reinstate. Response strategies, as with prescribed fire, prevention, and site rehabilitation will be structured around firefighter safety, target stand conditions, and values at risk:

- (a) Suppression response strategies will be based on site priorities that factor in the ecological target stand condition; values at risk, potential fire behavior and predicted fire effects. Where fire plays a natural role in the ecosystem, values at risk are low, fire may have been excluded for a generation, and readmitting fire to the landscape will result in less severe fire effects from future catastrophic fires, suppression strategies in some areas will be to manage the fire actively but without putting firefighters unnecessarily at risk.
- (b) Prescribed fire use will conform to management understanding of fire's role on that site. Burn plans will detail how it will occur, why, under what conditions, and what the implications of the prescription are based on, so that effects are mainly beneficial from a prescribed fire.
- (c) Fire prevention efforts will be directed toward human-caused ignitions that pose the greatest potential to create unacceptable losses.
- (d) Fuels management strategies will integrate historical forest stand conditions, prevention objectives, mutual aid responsibilities, cultural resource objectives, and political constraints. Strategies will address prevention objectives by modifying fire behaviors.

- (e) A safe work environment is cornerstone to all Crow Agency Fire and Aviation Management actions, which will meet all national standards set by the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) as a minimum.

Using statistical data from the Wildland Fire Management Information (WFMI) system covering a twenty-two year planning period from January 1988 through Dec 2009, Crow Agency actively suppressed 2,847 wildfires. This averages to 129 fires per year for this time period. These wildfires burned a total of 120,447 acres. Average annual occurrence by size class is summarized as follows:

Size Class by Acres	Number of Fires	Percent of Total Number of Fires	BIA Acres	Other Acres	Total Acres
A (0.1-0.2 acres)	1,173	41.2	124.5	20.2	144.7
B (0.3-9.9 acres)	1,271	44.6	2,305.8	238.9	2,544.7
C (10-99.9 acres)	295	10.4	8,070.8	596.2	8,667.0
D (100-299.9 acres)	51	1.8	7,246.0	256.0	7,502.0
E (300-999.9 acres)	30	1.1	14,822.9	355.0	15,177.9
F (1000-4999 acres)	18	0.6	44,711.5		44,711.5
G (5000 + acres)	6	0.2	33,330.0	8,400	41,730.0
No control acres reported	3	0.1	1.6		
Total	2,847	100	110,613.1	9,864.7	120,477.8

Table 1 – Number and acreage of fires by size class, 1988-2009.

Goals and objectives common for all FMU's include:

- (a) Improve ecosystem health and maintain or restore the range of ecological conditions in which native aquatic, vegetative, terrestrial and special status species evolved.
- (b) Protect, maintain, preserve, and/or restore habitats necessary for the conservation of species, and the ecosystems upon which they depend, to maintain viable and diverse populations of native plant, animal, and aquatic species including special status species.
- (c) Protect cultural and paleontological resources.
- (d) Reduce fire risk to Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) communities. Use fuels reduction methods to create defensible areas which coincide with the natural fire regime as close as reasonably feasible.

Desired future conditions common for all FMU's include:

- (a) Ensure uplands maintain their biological and ecological conditions.
- (b) Ensure riparian and wetlands maintain proper functioning condition.
- (c) Water quality meets Tribal and State standards.
- (d) Air quality meets Tribal and State standards.
- (e) Fuel loadings and timber stocking are near normal or historical levels.

Environmental constraints that benefit specific species may affect fire management on the Reservation. While no populations of threatened or identified species have been specifically located on the Crow Reservation in 2009, several potentially T&E species with habitat on the Reservation may affect management considerations. The greater sage grouse requires unburned sage habitat, and the mountain plover requires shortgrass prairie, for example. Fire management decisions for specific incidents will take into account the current best management practices for habitat restoration or preservation for species such as these, when their legal or scientific citations direct that their habitat preservation become a primary objective of land management.

3.1.1 Description of Wildland Fire Management Strategies by FMU Category

The five Fire Management Units on the Crow Indian Reservation are categorized to determine the opportunity to use varying fire management strategies. The defined criteria are as follows:

3.1.1.1 Category A (C-A) No fire – In these areas fire is undesirable or not historically influential, due to nearby human development or sensitive cultural areas, or due to the absence of fuels to support fire. At this time, no FMU's have been established as Category A areas. In these areas, if they were identified on the Reservation, mitigation and suppression is required to prevent direct threats to life and property, fire has not played a significant role in the maintenance of the ecosystem, and fire can no longer be tolerated without significant loss because of human development.

Fire Mitigation Considerations: Emphasis should be focused on prevention, detection, and rapid suppression response utilizing techniques that will reduce unwanted ignitions and threats to life, property, natural and cultural resources.

Fire Suppression Considerations: All wildland fires will be actively suppressed. Prescribed fire is not allowed. Suppression tactics, such as backfiring or burnouts, may be employed to mitigate an immediate threat to firefighter or public health and safety. Suppress all fires in accordance with management objectives based on current conditions and fire location.

Fuels treatment considerations: Non-fire fuel treatments are utilized. Unit costs for prescribed fire would be too prohibitive to implement efficiently.

3.1.1.2 Category B (C-B) Suppress unplanned fires – These are areas where wildland fire is not desirable because of current conditions, but the use of prescribed fire may be acceptable to achieve resource objectives. Crow FMUs of Fire Alley and Rangeland have been established as Category B. In these areas, fire plays a natural role in many functions of the ecosystem. However, these are areas where an unplanned ignition will have negative effects without mitigation or suppression.

Fire Mitigation Considerations: Prevention/mitigation programs minimize the impact of unplanned ignitions and subsequently reduce the threat to life, property, natural and cultural resources.

Fire Suppression Considerations: Fire suppression of unplanned fires is aggressive, especially in areas with direct threats to life and property. Suppress wildfires in accordance with management objectives, based on current conditions and fire location. Strategies will be tailored to address areas where structures and/or improvements are present, plant communities are at risk from the

ecological effects of fire due to current conditions/time of year, or other ecological constraints.

Fuels Treatment Considerations: Fuel hazard reduction is a priority to mitigate potential risks and associated loss. Prescribed fire and non-fire fuel treatments will be utilized to reduce the hazardous effects of unplanned wildland fire. Treatments may consist of multiple non-fire treatments before the use of fire will be considered. Unit costs for prescribed fire may be high due to mitigation measures and number of resources required.

3.1.1.3 Category C (C-C) – some fires managed for resource objectives, with constraints – Here wildland fire may be desirable under certain conditions, but constraints exist. The FMUs of the Wolf Mountains, Bighorn and Pryor Mountains have been established as Category C. In these areas, fire is a desirable and historical component of the ecosystem, however, ecological, social or political constraints must be considered, that could require point protection, limited or other perimeter suppression strategies. These constraints could include air quality, threatened and endangered species, or wildlife habitat considerations, as well as grazing and timberlands.

Fire Mitigation Considerations: Projects should mitigate potential threats to man-made and/or resource values before ignitions occur, and/or reduce the effects upon resource values of undesirable ignitions.

Fire Suppression Considerations: Considerations of human health and safety, along with critical ecological and resource constraints, are considered in determining fire management strategies on a case by case basis. Areas in this category would generally receive lower suppression priority in multiple wildland fire situations than would areas in A or B Category FMU's.

Fuels Treatment Considerations: Prescribed fire and non-fire fuels treatments may reduce hazardous effects of unplanned wildland fire. Significant prescribed fire activity would be expected to help attain desirable resource/ecological conditions. Prescribed fire plans are generally non-complex. When possible, fire protection and resource benefits are achieved concurrently.

3.1.1.4 Category D (C-D) – most fires managed for resource benefit, with few constraints – These are areas where wildland fire is desirable and there are few or no constraints for its use. No FMUs have been put in Category D, although the FMUs of the Pryor and Bighorn Mountains almost fall in this category. Here wildland fire for resource benefit and prescribed fire are used to achieve desired objectives such as to improve ecological diversity and watershed conditions and/or to reduce hazardous fuels. Human-caused fires are few.

Fire Suppression Considerations: These areas offer the greatest opportunity to take advantage of the full range of options available for managing wildland fire. Health and safety constraints will apply. Areas in this category would be the lowest suppression priority in a multiple fire situation.

Fuels Treatment Considerations: There is generally less need for the mechanical pre-treatment of fuels in category D. Prescribed fire for fuel hazard reduction is not a priority except where there is an immediate threat to public health and safety. If a treatment is necessary, both fire and non-fire treatments may be utilized, as allowed by the Forest Management Plan. Prescribed fire to obtain desired resource/ ecological condition(s) is appropriate.

3.2 Specific Descriptions of Fire Management Units

Fire Program Analysis (FPA) objectives suggest that agencies within a FPA zone share common Fire Management Units (FMUs), when local ecological zones and land uses cross jurisdictional boundaries. Within the Billings FPA zone, the Crow Reservation shares FMU 011, Pryor Mountains, and FMU 012, Bighorn West, with cooperating agencies including the USFS, NPS, BLM, and Crow Tribe.

Five subdivided Fire Management Units (FMUs) have been delineated on Crow Reservation lands based on common ecological types, communities and land uses, and fire regimes. They occasionally have FMU-specific management objectives, desired conditions, and guidelines, described below. A sixth FMU (FMU 001, Sage & Grass), lies in the Ceded Strip northeast of the present-day Reservation. Fire responses within each Fire Management Unit (FMU) will be based on strategic assessments of:

- (a) Firefighter and public safety.
- (b) Values at risk as defined by this FMP.
- (c) Current and predicted fire weather.
- (d) Current and predicted fire behavior.
- (e) Risk assessment that includes incident complexity.
- (f) Organizational structure and preparedness levels.
- (g) Results of WFDSS analysis.

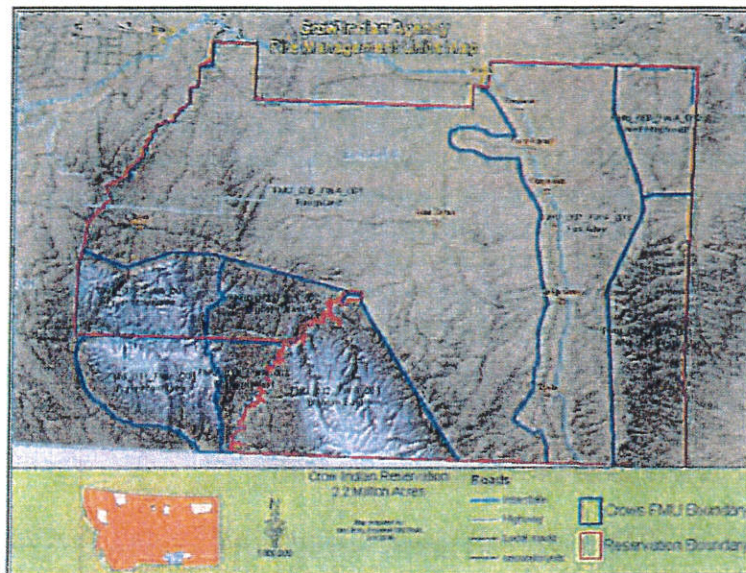


Figure 4 – Crow Fire Management Unit(s) Map

Goals and objectives common for all FMU's include:

- (e) Improve ecosystem health and maintain or restore the range of ecological conditions in which native aquatic, vegetative, terrestrial and special status species evolved.
- (f) Protect, maintain, preserve, and/or restore habitats necessary for the conservation of species, and the ecosystems upon which they depend, to maintain viable and diverse populations of native plant, animal, and aquatic species including special status species.
- (g) Protect cultural and paleontological resources.
- (h) Reduce fire risk to Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) communities. Use fuels reduction methods to create defensible areas which coincide with the natural fire regime as close as reasonably feasible.

Desired future conditions common for all FMU's include:

- (f) Ensure uplands maintain their biological and ecological conditions.
- (g) Ensure riparian and wetlands maintain proper functioning condition.
- (h) Water quality meets Tribal and State standards.
- (i) Air quality meets Tribal and State standards.
- (j) Fuel loadings and timber stocking are near normal or historical levels.

3.3 FMU 001 Sage and Grass

The “ceded strip” is no longer part of the Reservation proper, lying northeast of Hardin, Montana northward across the Yellowstone River. It is approximately 1,137,500 acres of lands now owned mainly by non-Tribal members, which was part of the Crow Reservation until 1903. About 200 scattered allotments held in trust for Tribal members remain in the area, and the BIA manages