



final draft of Fire & Smoke Work Group workplan scope

January 26, 2021

Overview

Smoke impacts from wildfires, prescribed fires, and agricultural burning are significant air pollution sources in the western United States. The length of fire season, and the duration, intensity, and impacts of individual wildfires are increasing. The reasons for this include a warming climate, a build-up of wildland fuels after years of policies prioritizing total fire suppression, and an expansion of the wildland-urban interface. The trend toward increasing fire frequency and size will continue in the future. With a better understanding of the role of fire in maintaining healthy landscapes, public policy is evolving to balance the inevitability of fire with the need to protect human infrastructure and public health and welfare. In addition to non-burning methods for fuels management, this is done in part through the application of prescribed fire at various scales and frequencies, requiring land managers and air quality agencies to cooperate continuously. Agricultural fire applications also involve collaborative management by regulators and landowners for these short-term seasonal events.

Additionally, related to the historic build-up of wildland fuels, ongoing climate change causes altered weather patterns, shifts in the types and composition of natural landscape communities, and increased threats from biological pests on weakened and transitioning wildland ecosystems. Periodic and sustained drought and pressure to expand human communities into the wildland-urban interface heighten the importance of better understanding and tracking emissions and impacts from wildland fire activity, both for planned prescribed fire and unplanned wildfire in the western United States¹. In recognition of the increasing contributions of wildfire smoke, in frequency and duration, to ambient air quality health and welfare impacts, western states and tribes, and federal agencies, have formed cooperative tracking systems that are the technical basis for improved understanding of smoke from uncontrolled wildfires. These systems require ongoing resources and improvement to compile and maintain the necessary data and apply management methods to address these growing, complex, and significant problems for air quality and public lands. This regional interstate cooperation is intended to support:

- Coordinated inter-jurisdictional responses to near-field impacts and longer-range transport of wildfire smoke;
- Collaborative efforts through ongoing discussion of Smoke Management Plans, Programs, and Procedures by air quality and land management agencies to plan, execute, and track in detail - approved and accomplished fire activity within prescription, for the purposes of mitigating impacts of all types, and
- Application of mechanisms in the federal Clean Air Act and through the health and welfare protection authorities of individual states and tribes. Rules and regulatory programs are enacted using a range and combination of options to manage fire activity and smoke impacts. These include preparation of State, Tribal, or Federal Implementation Plans (SIPs/TIPs/FIPs) for Regional Haze and criteria pollutants, Exceptional Events demonstrations, high-resolution short- and longer-term fire emissions inventories for planning, as well as by other methods.

¹ Both types of wildland fire (wildfire and prescribed fire) can be considered “natural sources” for Regional Haze program planning purposes.

Responsibilities and Deliverables

The Fire and Smoke Work Group (FSWG) will focus on, address, organize work, and report on:

- Smoke Emissions and Modeling:
 - Coordinating analysis and planning activities related to improving and tracking fire activity data to support and deliver emissions inventories for smoke emissions
 - Review the treatment of fire and smoke emissions in modeling studies
- Smoke Management Planning and Coordination:
 - Support planning work to assess the historic and range of future year air quality impacts from fire
 - Identify and improve communication and collaboration for Smoke Management Programs
 - Improve coordination between state, tribal, local, and federal agencies
 - Establish a common framework to define frequently used terms and ideas to promote communication and understanding between state, tribal, local, and federal agencies
- Exceptional Events Support
 - Track and facilitate information about Exceptional Events assessment efforts

This work must take into consideration differing levels of expertise, programmatic approaches, cultural necessities, and needs by agency. Several of these activities involve close coordination, facilitated by the Technical Steering Committee (TSC), as is done with other WRAP Work Groups.

Operations and Reporting

The Co-Chairs will provide a summary report to the TSC at each TSC/WG Co-Chairs meeting, about the status of activities, findings, and work products for the topics described above. The Co-Chairs, with support from WESTAR-WRAP staff, will maintain an active open membership composed of interested state, tribal, local, and federal air agency and land manager experts, and publish the FSWG membership list and track participation on the [FSWG webpage](#). No formal detailed workplan is required but welcome.

The FSWG will have regular virtual or in-person meetings on alternating months to manage activities and provide oversight to projects. Subcommittees to be defined by the FSWG will execute, track, and provide oversight for both in-kind and/or contractor-supported FSWG projects and will meet at self-defined separate intervals. The task-oriented topics and responsibilities for a Subcommittee will be a subset of the bulleted topics above from this Responsibilities and Deliverables section. The topics above will need additional clarification and definition in the process of defining Subcommittees' scopes, assignments, and intended deliverables in writing. The Subcommittees will report regularly to the FSWG. The FSWG Co-Chairs will plan and direct the bimonthly calls and meetings, and with assistance from WESTAR-WRAP staff, take the lead in communications and other necessary TSC and Board interaction.

+++++

Examples of Existing FSWG Work Products and Materials – updates for FSWG page

- WESTAR Prescribed Fire and Smoke Management Dialogue: [Recommendations for the WESTAR Council](#)
- WESTAR Prescribed Fire and Smoke Management Dialogue: [Summary of February 28 Meeting Themes](#) March 27, 2019
- [Scope of Work for Conceptual Model for Fire Data project](#)
- WRAP FSWG 2017 Workplan Products
 - [Exceptional Event Data Resource List](#)
 - [WRAP region map with Smoke Management Programs](#)
 - 2014 Actual, Representative Baseline and Future Fire Scenarios [Report | Summary Presentation](#)
 - [Representative Baseline and Future Fire Scenarios Working Group Scope](#)