



EPA Environmental News

For Immediate Release: June 14, 2005
Contact: Lisa Fasano, (415) 947-4307
Cell: (415) 760-5421

U.S. EPA announces fire management protocol Federal, state and local agencies work to manage naturally caused fires

SAN FRANCISCO – Today the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency unveiled a strategy for the Sierra Nevada mountains that outlines how local, state and federal agencies will manage lightning-caused fire as part of an overall strategy to reduce catastrophic wildfire danger while reducing health impacts from smoke.

The "Wildland Fire Use" protocol was developed with input from federal, state and local land managers and air quality agencies. Together these agencies have agreed to ways of meeting their mutual goals of protecting public health and safety.

Land managers will use the protocol to continually monitor fire conditions throughout the incident and region. Air quality conditions will be watched closely so that smoke from these fires does not adversely affect residents in the San Joaquin Valley and surrounding foothill and mountain communities. When air quality conditions are forecasted to be unhealthy or deteriorate, fire fighting crews will take action necessary to avoid smoke impacts.

"This plan will ensure air quality is maintained, while we protect the public from ravaging fire danger and restore healthy forests," said Deborah Jordan, the EPA's air division director for the Pacific Southwest region. "Working together these agencies have taken unprecedented steps to develop a plan that will be a win-win for everyone."

"The National Park Service was very pleased to participate in this interagency effort," said Russel J. Wilson, Deputy Superintendent of Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks. "The protocol is an important tool that will help us meet our fire management goals while strengthening relationships with our neighbors."

Over the last century, society's influence has altered historic fire cycles, leading to a tremendous increase in accumulated woody debris, brush and small trees. These conditions threaten firefighter safety, communities, and natural resources. One way for land management agencies to restore healthy conditions is to take advantage of some naturally caused fires under specific conditions.

If not carefully managed, fire emissions and smoke can adversely impact human health and be a nuisance to residents and businesses. Fires produce air emissions including fine particles, and gases that contribute to smog formation. These emissions, under the right conditions, can contribute levels of pollution that exceed health based air quality standards and reduce visibility in national parks and wilderness areas.

"Smoke management is an important part of California's clean air strategy," said Lynn Terry, Deputy Executive Officer of the California Air Resources Board. "By cooperatively managing natural fires, we can

**VISIT OUR HOME PAGE FOR UP-TO-DATE ENVIRONMENTAL NEWS & INFORMATION:
<http://www.epa.gov/region09>**

minimize health impacts from catastrophic wildfires.”

#

Cooperating Agencies:

U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, Region 9

California Air Resources Board

U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service

California Department of Forestry

and these California Local Air Districts

Amador County

Calaveras County

El Dorado County

Great Basin Unified

Mariposa County

Placer County

National Park Service

Bureau of Land Management

Nevada Department of Environmental Protection

Sacramento Metro

Tuolumne County

San Joaquin Valley