



**File Code:** 5100; 1310  
**Route To:**

**Date:** April 21, 2021

**Subject:** Sustainable Operations in Incident Management – 2021 Fire Year Leader’s Intent  
**To:** Regional Foresters and Station Directors

Sustainability is central to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service’s mission, “To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation’s forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.” The National Greening Fire Team, in partnership with Washington Office Fire and Aviation Management, coordinates efforts in support of sustainability goals. Fire operations have an extensive supply chain, resulting in substantial resource consumption. The Greening Fire Team has tools that can help the fire and aviation community reduce waste and energy consumption while we meet our operational and safety objectives.

In 2019, the [National Greening Fire Team](#) implemented a first-of-its-kind incident recycling Blanket Purchase Agreement that provides on-site recycling management services for incidents. Through its use, as much as 46 percent of fire camp waste was diverted from landfills in 2019, and nearly 43 percent in 2020. This value-added service makes a difference and strengthens sustainable business practices.

Earlier this month, the Acting National Fire Director issued a letter to the Regional Fire Directors outlining the opportunity to support climate change priorities by using the Blanket Purchase Agreement and other tools to advance sustainable operations where possible.

I encourage you to amplify this direction and stand ready to offer collaboration and support to your efforts to reduce consumption of financial and natural resources at incidents.

As always, thank you for your leadership and commitment to our collective mission.

Jaelith HALL-RIVERA  
Acting Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry

Enclosure

cc: FS-pdl wo spf fam regional fire directors; FS-pdl National Greening Fire Team; FS-pdl National GFT Ambassadors; FS-pdl National GFT Basic; FS-pdl wo nfs eng SusOps Coordinators; FS-pdl wo nfs osc regional climate coordinators; FS-pdl wo nfs osc staff



**File Code:** 5100**Date:** April 7, 2021**Route To:****Subject:** Sustainable Operations in Incident Management – Preparing for the 2021 Fire Year**To:** Regional Fire Directors

Sustainability is central to the U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service’s mission, “To sustain the health, diversity, and productivity of the Nation's forests and grasslands to meet the needs of present and future generations.” The National Greening Fire Team, in partnership with Washington Office Fire and Aviation Management, coordinates efforts in support of sustainability goals. Fire operations have an extensive supply chain, resulting in substantial resource consumption. The Greening Fire Team has tools that can help the fire and aviation community reduce waste and energy consumption while we meet our operational and safety objectives.

Policies which guide this effort include U.S. Department of Agriculture Environmental Department Regulation 5600-05, which requires the Forest Service to divert 55 percent of non-hazardous waste from landfills. In addition, the *2021 Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* (Red Book) states, “*Every incident should seek opportunities to reduce unnecessary waste and limit impacts associated with management actions...by promoting recycling and encouraging the use of alternative energy sources as long as such efforts do not compromise operational or safety objectives*” ([Source](#)). Finally, Executive Order 14008 (“Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad”) established a goal to achieve net-zero emissions economy-wide by 2050 and a carbon pollution-free electricity sector by 2035. Achieving such climate-smart management objectives requires adapting our incident business practices.

We ask those who support fire operations to identify opportunities to apply sustainable business practices and to leverage the Greening Fire Team tools and resources. It is important that actions to reduce consumption of financial and natural resources are implemented without compromising firefighter and public safety or impeding incident objectives.

Now more than ever, employee health and safety are our number one priority. The unique challenges associated with COVID-19 also present an opportunity to synchronize safety and sustainability, to find ways to be more conscientious, and to think “outside the box.” Let’s work together to pivot our incident management operations in a way that can fulfill these multiple objectives.

Specifically, we expect the following during the 2021 fire year:

- Line Officers include expectations for implementing sustainability Best Management Practices on incidents (see Enclosure 1)



- At Type 1 and 2 incidents, incident management teams leverage the [On-site Incident Recycling Blanket Purchase Agreement](#) to order a recycling contractor to reduce waste where feasible. This blanket purchase agreement provides recycling services for the Northwest, northern California, southern California, and Southwest Geographic Area Coordination Centers.
- All other Geographic Area Coordination Centers are encouraged to employ other means (e.g., [Emergency Equipment Rental Agreements](#)) to implement incident recycling.

Thanks to the creativity and dedication of employees, the Forest Service increased recycling orders by 50 percent in Fiscal Year 2020. However, due to COVID-19, many of our operational adjustments such as pre-packaged meals resulted in an increased volume of waste. The [Incident Waste Diversion Dashboard](#) provides useful benchmarks to gauge our performance. Overall, we are achieving 30 percent waste diversion on average, with up to 40 percent waste diversion in northern California. These are great outcomes – and we can do more using our blanket purchase agreement and other tools and resources from the Greening Fire Team.

Employees at all levels are encouraged to join the Greening Fire Team Ambassador Program to build skills and serve as champions for sustainability in fire operations. See the [Greening Fire Team Ambassador Program Overview Brief](#) for how to join.

For more information – or to provide feedback regarding fire-related sustainable operations successes or challenges – contact the [National Greening Fire Team's Shared Inbox](#). In addition, bookmark and check the [National Greening Fire Team's Website](#) regularly for best practices, benchmarking data, and other resources to support your sustainability efforts.

Thank you for continuing to work towards decreasing our environmental footprint in fire operations.



PATRICIA A. GRANTHAM  
Acting Director, Fire and Aviation Management

Enclosures

cc: FS-pdl National Greening Fire Team; FS-pdl National GFT Ambassadors; FS-pdl National GFT Basic; FS-pdl wo nfs eng SusOps Coordinators; FS-pdl wo nfs eng energy managers; FS-pdl wo nfs osc regional climate coordinators; FS-pdl wo nfs osc staff



## **Summary of Recent National Greening Fire Team Efforts**

In 2017, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Forest Service Washington Office Fire and Aviation Management partnered with the National Greening Fire Team to reduce the ecological footprint of fire operations.

### ***Fiscal Year 2019 – 2021 Greening Fire Team highlights include:***

- Piloting [contracted incident recycling](#); establishing an [On-Site Incident Recycling Blanket Purchase Agreement](#) to service Geographic Area Coordination Centers in the Northwest, northern California, southern California and the Southwest; and creating a [Justification Statement](#) to drive increased ordering of blanket purchase agreement vendors.
- Initiating a communication campaign to reach a wide audience of fire personnel (e.g., incident management teams, buying teams, resource advisors, etc.); developing a [quarterly bulletin](#); and significantly updating the [Greening Fire Team website](#) to share team accomplishments and tools in service to our agency and partners.
- Executing a new interagency agreement with the [Department of Energy National Renewable Energy Laboratory](#) to identify, test, and document additional, cost-effective sustainability best management practices applicable on incidents.

## **Sustainability Best Management Practices**

### ***Incident Leadership and Sustainability Presence***

- Identify staff (e.g., local sustainable operations point of contact, Greening Fire Team Chairs, and dispatch personnel) to work with incident management teams to assist with implementing sustainable operations at incident command posts, incident bases, and spike camps.
- Include expectations for sustainable operations within the Delegation of Authority (see sample language below). The hosting unit should provide local expertise on recycling capabilities and other opportunities for sustainable operations.

### ***Delegation of Authority/Letter of Leader's Intent Language Suggestions***

- Broad Statement:
  1. Work with [Contact's Name Here] to incorporate sustainable operations and utilize sustainability best management practices in all incident management activities to minimize environmental, social, and, when possible, fiscal impacts without compromising firefighter and public safety or impeding incident operations.
- Specific Actions:
  1. Implement sustainability best management practices as described in this letter, and as outlined in the April 2019 Department of Energy's National Renewable Energy Laboratory *Opportunities for Energy, Water, and Waste Reduction at U.S. Forest Service Fire Camps* report, that are applicable to your incident:  
<https://www.nrel.gov/docs/fy19osti/73771.pdf>.
  2. Utilize on-site recycle services to collect, sort, transport, and report on waste diversion rates throughout the incident.

A sample Delegation of Authority/Letter of Leader's Intent incorporating a strategic subset of sustainable operations considerations is available for review on the [Greening Fire Team Pinyon Site](#).

### ***Awareness and Communication***

- Solicit feedback regarding sustainable operations occurring at incidents. Include sustainable operations information in after action reviews and closeout meetings.
- Increase awareness through inserting relevant sustainability messaging into incident action plans and operational briefings.
- Work with public information officers to assist in the dissemination of sustainable operations information at incidents.
- To strengthen your communications, refer to the Myth Buster section, plus other timely updates, in our newly launched [National Greening Fire Team e-Bulletin](#).

### ***Reduce Waste at Fire Camps and Caches***

- Caches are to consider opportunities to recycle fire hose (see [North Zone Fire Cache Hose2Habitat Workshop Example](#)). Note: this is not intended to occur at the incident.
- Identify opportunities to recycle or reduce camp waste, diverting it from local landfills. Examples:
  - Type 1 and 2 incidents, leverage the [On-site Incident Recycling Blanket Purchase Agreement or Emergency Equipment Rental Agreement](#) to order a recycling contractor to streamline and increase the efficacy of waste diversion efforts. Refer to the [Blanket Purchase Agreement Implementation Quick Guide](#) for updates and information on how to place orders using the blanket purchase agreement.
  - At Type 2 and 3 incidents, identify local recycling opportunities/partnerships at fire camps (e.g., a Civilian Conservation Corps crew, a 4H Club, a Boy/Girl Scout troop, etc.) based on sustainability input received from the hosting unit.
  - Solar-powered radio repeaters have proven effective. Adding a lead-acid battery further extends the operating hours, and the systems withstand harsh field conditions.

### ***Reduce Fuel Consumption & Fleet Emissions***

- Seek alternative sources of transportation in lieu of renting single passenger-occupied vehicles. Coordinate with local dispatch centers to arrange for shuttles, carpooling, or other means of travel to incident command posts when possible.
- Use the most fuel-efficient vehicle for the job, when available.
- Minimize vehicle idling. The [Vehicle Idling Procedure videos](#) (one focused on regular fuel, another focused on diesel fuel) are helpful resources on this topic.

### ***Conserve Energy***

- Pursue the use of renewable or alternative energy sources, where possible.
- Manage energy consumption proactively during operations by using efficient technologies. Refer to the National Technology and Development Program's [Sustainability Solutions Website](#) for more ideas.

### ***Conserve Water***

- Encourage the use of appropriate potable water options to limit the use of bottled water.
- Implement water conservation tactics (e.g., avoid over-watering for dust abatement in camp).
- Use vendors that recycle water, where permissible.

### ***Sustainable Acquisition***

- As required by U.S. Department of Agriculture and Forest Service policy, comply with [sustainable acquisition criteria](#). Ensure dispatch centers and buying teams are fully aware of such criteria.