NFPORS

National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System

Implementation of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003

NFPORS has been identified as the information system that will be used to collect, store and report information on the implementation of Title I of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003. This paper provides background on necessary modifications to NFPORS to accomplish this task.

Background

The National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) has been identified as the information system that will be used to collect, store, maintain and report information regarding the implementation of Title I of the Healthy Forest Restoration Act of 2003 (HFRA). One of the many purposes of HFRA is to "reduce wildfire risk to communities, municipal water supplies, and other at-risk Federal land through a collaborative process of planning, prioritizing, and implementing hazardous fuel reduction projects."

It is an aim of HFRA to expedite the preparation and implementation of authorized projects. The types of Federal lands that qualify for the expedited review procedures under HFRA are:

1) The wildland-urban interface (WUI) areas as defined in the act.

2) All condition class 3 lands, as well as condition class 2 lands within fire regimes I, II or III, that are in such proximity to a municipal watershed or its feeder streams that a significant risk exists that a wildfire event will have adverse effects on the water quality of the municipal water supply or the maintenance of the system.

3) Where windthrow or blowdown or the existence of an epidemic of disease or insects significantly threatens ecosystems or resources.

4) Areas that have threatened and endangered species habitat, where the natural fire regimes are important for (or where wildfire poses a threat to) the species or their habitat and the fuel reduction project will enhance protection from catastrophic wildfire (and complies with applicable guidelines in management or recovery plans).

Discussion

NFPORS is used to collect and report plans and accomplishments for the hazardous fuels reduction programs for the Department of Interior and the USDA Forest Service. Extending this system to include HFRA authorized hazardous fuels requires that:

1) HFRA projects and/or treatments are specifically identified,
2) Treatments occurring on lands within the WUI are identified,
3) Fire regime and pretreatment condition class of treatment areas are identified,
4) Identify projects implemented to control epidemic insects and diseases,
5) Identify projects implemented to protect municipal water supply system, and
6) Identify projects implemented to protect or enhance habitat of threatened or endangered species.

NFPORS currently collects all of the above information for hazardous fuels projects except for items 1, 4 and 5. Each item will be further discussed below.

HFRA Identifier (Item 1)

Option 1 – Add NEPA Activity Types for HFRA.

HFRA establishes an expedited environmental review process for hazardous fuels projects that meet specified criteria. Thus it is necessary to add the following activity types for NEPA: NEPA – HFRA EA and NEPA – HFRA EIS. HFRA projects could be identified exclusively by the NEPA activity types and it would then be possible to inferred that all treatments within the project are HFRA treatments.

However, given the importance of clearly identifying all acres treated under HFRA this option is insufficient.

Option 2 - Add HFRA Identifier to NFPORS Treatments

A mandatory Yes/No data element for HFRA is easily added to NFPORS treatments. This option provides the greatest flexibility to NFPORS users as they create projects yet assures that HFRA treatments are clearly indicated. However, this option would not allow us to accurately count the number of HFRA decisions or the number of acres covered by a single decision.

Option 3 – Add HFRA Identifier to NFPORS Projects

Like the option above, a mandatory Yes/No data element is easily added to the NFPORS projects. This option requires that the definition of "Project" be tightened such that all

activities and treatments within the project are covered by a single HFRA decision document and that this is fully communicated to all NFPORS users. This option does allow the number of HFRA decisions and the number of planned and completed acres for each decision to be reported. It also establishes a direct relationship between project objectives (T&E habitat protection, T&E habitat enhancement, or Insect & Disease Control) with a specific decision record.

Insect and Disease Control (Item 4)

The simplest and least costly option to implement the need to identify projects implemented to control epidemic insects and disease is to add a project objective for "Control epidemic insects or disease." This option is consistent with the current implementation of project objectives in NFPORS. NFPORS already has a number of other project objectives including protection of T&E species habitat and the enhancement of T&E species habitat.

Municipal Water Supply System (Item 5)

Like insect and disease control, the simplest and least costly option for identifying projects that protect municipal water supply systems is to add a project objective for this purpose.

Reports

All of the changes discussed above are changes to the information collected. We also anticipate recognize that there is a need to add specific HFRA reports. However, the specific requirements of these reports are not yet available. However, HRFA information will be added to the NFPORS Microsoft Excel extracts so that *ad hoc* reporting is immediately available.

Recommendations

In order to accomplish the task of using NFPORS to collect, store and report on HFRA, Title I, we recommend the following specific changes:

1) Add HFRA identifier (Yes/No) at the NFPORS project level.
2) Add new activity types for NEPA – HFRA EA and NEPA – HFRA EIS.
3) Add a new project objective entitled "Control Epidemic Insects or Disease."
4) Add a new project objective entitled "Protect Municipal Water Supply System."

In addition, we will need to update the NFPORS Hazardous Fuels Users Manual to reflect the changes identified above and to incorporate the HFRA specific definitions.

Finally, we will need to produce a Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) that will outline the specific details on how to use NFPORS to report HFRA information.

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