

Chapter 19 FWS Reviews & Investigations Supplement

[Link to Redbook Chapter 19](#)

1. Types of Reviews

c. Individual Fire Reviews

Fire reviews examine all or part of the operations on an individual fire. The fire may be ongoing or controlled. These evaluations may be local, state/regional, or national review, a “hotline” review, an incident management team closeout review, a wildland fire review, or an escaped prescribed fire reviews. Fire reviews should also be conducted on well run and efficient fires in order to document efficient procedures for use on future fires.

1) Local Level Review

The Refuge Manager will appoint other qualified persons, including the refuge Fire Management Officer (or an official who has designated fire program management responsibilities) to be a part of the review.

The purpose of this review is to provide the Refuge Manager with information to recognize commendable actions and to take needed corrective action(s). As a minimum an oral review will be conducted. A written evaluation, prepared by the incident commander is required for all fires with extended operational periods.

Costs associated with the review will be charged to the account assigned to the fire with the approval of the Regional Fire Management Coordinator. A copy of the complete report will be sent to the Regional Fire Management Coordinator, who will review it and, if appropriate, forward a copy to the Fire Management Branch.

2) State/Regional Level Review

The regional level review normally will be conducted at the refuge where the fire occurred. It will be attended by the Refuge Manager of the refuge. The refuge's Fire Management Officer (or the official who has designated fire program management responsibilities), the Incident Commander(s) or Prescribed Fire Burn Boss(es) for the fire, and other individuals agreed upon by the Regional Director and Refuge Manager.

A copy of the review report will be sent to the Fire Management Branch. Costs associated with the review will be charged to the account assigned to the fire.

3) National Level Review

The national level review normally will be conducted at the refuge where the fire occurred. It will be attended by the Refuge Manager of the refuge, the refuge's Fire Management Officer (or an official who has designated fire program management responsibilities), the Regional Fire Management Coordinator, the Incident Commander(s) for the fire, and other individuals agreed upon by the Service Fire Management Coordinator and the Regional Director.

All costs associated with the review will be charged to the account assigned to the fire.

4) Escaped Prescribed Fire Review

All prescribed fires that are reclassified as unplanned and unwanted wildland fires will be reviewed by the refuge manager (or designated representative). This review may be included as part of a Regional or National Level review if necessary. The purpose of the review is to determine why and under what circumstances a prescribed fire had to be reclassified as a wildland fire. It will identify the circumstances leading to the reclassification of the fire, what actions were taken after reclassification as a wildland fire, and possible future actions that need to be taken to avoid similar situations.

A formal report will be prepared, signed by the refuge manager, and a copy forwarded to the Regional Fire Management Coordinator and the Fire Management Branch.

Costs of the review will be charged to the account assigned to the fire with the approval of the RFMC.

5) Distribution of Individual Fire Reviews

Regional Fire Management Coordinators will be responsible for determining specific information from fire reviews that might be of interest or concern to other refuge areas. Such information might be specific problems that occurred or recommendations that might be applicable elsewhere. RFMCs will forward such information within 30 days to the Fire Management Branch for appropriate distribution.

e. Program Reviews

The National Wildlife Refuge System, Fire Management Branch, has national program oversight and intra and interagency coordination responsibility for all aspects of the fire management program. This oversight includes ensuring that there is continuity within the program, compliance with Service and Departmental policy and uniformity and compliance in the use of program

funds. Program areas to be reviewed include program administration, preparedness, emergency fire operations (including rehabilitation), and resource fire management.

Program reviews ([Exhibit 3-6-2](#)) will focus on the positive aspects within the program, the new and innovative ideas that may have Regional, national or interagency application, and on the services being provided to our "customer." Most important in the review will be the safety policies and practices within the program and the people involved in the program.

1) Objectives

The review is designed to obtain, analyze, and evaluate information concerning the administrative, managerial, operational, and monitoring procedures of the program. In general the objectives of the program review are to:

- i. Validate adequacy of management policy, structure, and guidance to support field organizations in performing their duties.
- ii. Confirm compliance with laws, regulations, and Departmental guidance.
- iii. Identify opportunities to share ideas, methods, and techniques developed by other offices and individuals.

2) Types of Program Reviews

- i. Operations Evaluations: Operations evaluations of refuges and regions will include the review of fire management programs to assure compliance with established Fish and Wildlife Service standards.
- ii. Fire Program Review: The Chief of the Fire Management Branch will convene an ad hoc team to review Servicewide fire activity during any year in which significant, unusual or controversial fire activity occurs. This review team will analyze the reports from national level reviews and appropriate region level reviews to determine what, if any, policy or operational changes should be initiated. The review team will develop findings and recommendations and establish priorities for action.
- iii. FIREBASE Review: All refuges receiving annual, recurring FIREBASE funding in addition to normal unit strength funding will be subject to a periodic fire-program review. Refuges will be reviewed on a two, three or four-year schedule, depending on the dollar value of a refuge's FIREBASE allocation. The Fire Management Branch will determine this value each year and will notify regional offices accordingly. From this information, regional offices will compile a list of refuges to be reviewed each fiscal year. These reviews will be conducted by either the regional offices, the Fire Management Branch or both. Refuges should be reviewed more frequently than the standard schedule if known problems exist or if program deficiencies have been identified in

previous program reviews. These reviews will include both an audit of expenditures and an analysis of how well FIREBASE addresses program management needs. When appropriate, the FIREBASE review may be conducted in concert with an operation evaluation of the refuge.

3) Process

A team approach will be used during the review process. Membership on this team may vary depending upon the objectives that are to be met. General composition for Regional reviews will involve the following positions or expertise:

- i. Service Fire Management Coordinator or designee (Team Leader)
- ii. Regional Fire Management Coordinator
- iii. Peer Regional Fire Management Coordinator or Fire Management officer from another Region
- iv. Program Specialist/Analyst from Finance, Personnel or
- v. Fire Management Branch staff specialists as needed

The basic review team should not exceed five or six people. There may be fewer members required depending on the complexity. Some refuges will also be visited. Travel costs will be shared between the Regional and national offices.

The review will begin with a meeting of the Review Team, Regional Director and the Assistant Regional Director, Refuges and Wildlife. The purpose of this meeting will be to clarify the review objectives, and to ensure understanding of the process and the expected product. A close-out with the same group will occur at the conclusion of the review where a rough draft of major review findings and recommendations will be presented.

The review will look at what guides the program now, what is in place, how that is working and focus on policy, procedures and practices. If a policy or procedure is not being followed, the reason behind this must be determined and suggestions for change identified.

The Region and any refuges visited will need to make certain information available to the Review Team prior to the review. This material will be standard types of reports that would normally be available at the Regional or refuge level. Some information will be requested ahead of the Review Team's arrival in order to maximize field time and to reduce the amount of time required to address some of the program review questions.

The types of information may include but are not limited to:

- i. Fire management plans and related support documents.

- ii. Fire FTE profile for the Region including location, job title, and funding source.
- iii. FFS reports that show expenditures of fire funds including emergency funds for current year.
- iv. Budget allocation documents showing funding spread at the Regional Office and at the refuge.
- v. End-of-year summary reports showing actual expenditures against planned expenditures.
- vi. Copies of most recent internal reviews conducted by the Region.
- vii. Annual narratives.
- viii. Cooperative agreements and/or contracts.
- ix. Latest reviews or evaluations that have relevance to the fire program.

Personal interviews will also be conducted with individuals outside of the fire program at the Regional and refuge levels. Interviews will include cooperators, Finance, Procurement, Personnel staffs, etc.

4) Findings and Recommendations

A close-out will be conducted with any refuge visited as a courtesy to the refuge staff. Any major finding will usually be made known to the refuge manager unless the Regional Director establishes different guidance.

The close-out with the Regional staff will provide at least a rough draft of the final report. The intent again is to improve the program so this will be approached in a positive manner. The final report will be issued from the Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System. Due dates for any follow-up actions and responsibility will be negotiated to ensure reasonable dates are established that will lead to success in improving the program.

5) Follow-up

Follow-up responsibilities should be assigned to the Regional Director or designee and to the Chief, National Wildlife Refuge System when the review involves the Washington Office. The action would serve to bring the review and its recommendations to closure by validating that all actions had been completed. This final step adds validity to the process and illustrates top management support to enhancing the program through the review process.