

USE OF WILDLAND FIRE IN GREAT SMOKY MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

Dana Cohen^{1†}, Beth Buchanan², Bob Dellinger³, Leon Konz⁴, Mark Taylor⁵

Great Smoky Mountains National Park, located in Tennessee and North Carolina, had a policy of suppressing all fires from its inception in 1934 until the adoption of wildland fire use policy in its 1996 Fire Management Plan. This enables park fire staff to manage lightning-caused fires to accomplish resource objectives so long as the fires meet certain predefined conditions. The Smokies was the first federal land management unit in the Southern Appalachians to use naturally ignited fires. Unlike prescribed fires, lightning-caused fires tend to burn over long periods with a variety of behavior and effects in a mosaic over the landscape. They have been an essential tool for better understanding the natural role of fire in the park.

¹Fuels Specialist, Dixie National Forest; ²Fire Ecologist, USDA Forest Service, Southern Region; ³Biological Science Technician (Fire Effects), North Cascades National Park; ⁴Fire Management Officer (ret.), Great Smoky Mountains National Park; ⁵Fire Management Officer, Great Smoky Mountains National Park; [†]Corresponding author, P.O. Box 645, Panguitch, UT 84759, (435) 676-9372, email: dcohen@fs.fed.us.