

Policy on Fire Management on MAI Land (v0.7)

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This policy acknowledges that the Monhegan Associates Bylaws are the governing document for all Monhegan Associates activities. With that in mind, this document supersedes all prior policies or statements specifically related to the contents of this document.

Purpose

The purpose of the *Policy on Fire Management on MAI Lands* is to define the role and activities of the Monhegan Associates in mitigating the effect of fire on Monhegan's wildlands, and minimizing the likelihood of fire spreading from village to wildlands or from wildlands to village.

The relationship of Monhegan Associates Incorporated and Monhegan Plantation is one of mutual respect and support. The implementation below describes the extent to which the Monhegan Associates will endeavor to mitigate fire dangers.

Scope

The scope of this policy covers:

- Actions of the Monhegan Associates in working to minimize fire danger and the spread of fire from village to wildlands and wildlands to village.
- Areas of standing dead trees adjacent to the village.
- Other areas of the wildlands that are congested with flammable undergrowth, the removal of which would substantially reduce the risk of fire spread.

Definitions

- **MAI** - Monhegan Associates Incorporated
- **The Wildlands** - Areas of Monhegan, Manana, and other nearby islands owned by Monhegan Associates and not currently leased to another entity
- **The Village** - Land and structures within Monhegan Plantation not owned by the Monhegan Associates

- **Clear, Clearing, Cleared** - A state of fire mitigation to prevent spread, which *may* include cutting and removal of standing dead trees, and dense flammable vegetation, either partly or completely, according to the guidelines listed under Implementation.

Policy

Monhegan Associates may undertake clearing of its own land for the purpose of reducing risk of fire spread. This can include measures within fifty feet of existing structures on abutting privately owned property, and in other areas where dead trees and brush constitute a significant fire danger. These measures will be taken pending approval by a vote of the Trustees, when requested by the Fire and Safety Committee.

The head of the Fire and Safety Committee and other interested parties will periodically assess areas of land that meet the criteria for initial clearing or maintenance clearing, and after review by the Fire and Safety Committee, will annually provide a work plan to be submitted to the Trustees for budget approval. The plan will include estimated costs, tools to be used, and a suggested work schedule which will minimize risk of fire hazard (see Implementation section) and harm to the wildlife.

Abutting landowners will be consulted by representatives of MAI about the clearing of MAI land near their property, and as much as possible, work will proceed with an agreed upon plan. However MAI maintains the right to clear its own land if it is deemed necessary by a two-thirds ($\frac{2}{3}$) vote by the Trustees.

The Fire and Safety Committee will prepare and review informational literature about MAI policy, to landowners on Monhegan.

Implementation

Clearing of Land

MAI maintains the sole responsibility for assessing any necessary work on its land and conducting this work. All work will be done by a business or individual approved by the Fire and Safety Committee of MAI.

In general, MAI land located within a distance of 30 to 50 feet from an existing private structure can be cleared to effect a firebreak zone.

The boundary line of the Associates property should be agreed upon by the landowner and MAI and marked prior to any clearing. The cleared land cannot be used for any purposes other than as a setback for mitigating a fire hazard. It is important that fire mitigation work not be misinterpreted as a way of enlarging a lawn or providing a parking space or other personal uses by abutting landowners. Any such use is a violation of MAI policy in protecting the wildlands.

MAI will not remove stumps, root systems, live trees, or rocks. MAI will not use herbicides, in the cleared firebreak, nor will it plant alternative vegetation,

Felling of standing and fallen dead wood in the forest may be done by MAI up to 100 feet from an existing structure, as well as in fire fuel-congested areas as mentioned above. Limbs should be removed and every effort made to lay the timber down in ground contact to promote decomposition.

All gasoline powered devices must be outfitted with approved spark arrestors.

If a landowner prefers to not have the abutting MAI land cleared, they may submit a signed request to the Fire and Safety Committee. This written request will be kept on file and reviewed by the Trustees annually. However, MAI, not an abutting landowner, will make the final determination.

Informed Community

MAI will conduct ongoing consultation with the Plantation about Monhegan Associates fire prevention policies, so that the community can be kept aware of these policies and ongoing work. Communication with the Maine State Forestry Service will be maintained in an ongoing fashion and recommendations for property protection will be made available to homeowners as well.

Forbidding Fire

Lighting of fires is forbidden on MAI land. This includes smoking, campfires, burning of debris, and so-called controlled burns. These activities each markedly increase the risk of wildfires.

Rationale

Forbidding Fire

The number one cause of Maine Wildfires is the burning of debris, as can be seen from the State Forestry Service data. Campfires are around third on the list depending on the region, and smoking materials are a smaller but significant contributor as well. Equipment such as gasoline and diesel-powered generators and vehicles are also a very major cause.

Monhegan Associates is not a fire-fighting organization and the Plantation as well, has very limited fire-suppression capability. It is therefore imperative that practices which create fire hazards be prohibited.

Clearance Distances

The Forestry Service has a standard of 30 feet as a safe distance between structures and flammable vegetation. In considering the unique situation of Monhegan's wildlands and our (1.) strong winds, (2.) lack of a robust local fire response unit, and (3.) distance from other assisting response teams on the mainland, it was suggested that a 50 foot swath of relatively non-flammable terrain would be better fire prevention for our island situation.

A distance of 100 feet is the recommended distance from man-made structures to standing dead trees. This is especially true of conifers which provide a "fire-ladder" to carry a ground fire up into the forest crown. Felling them and laying them in full contact with the relatively moist soil of Monhegan's forests aids in keeping a fire low and slower to spread, as wet wood decomposes rather quickly.

Internal References

These internal references are among the Monhegan Associates' documents that have been consulted when writing this policy:

Certificate of Organization, Monhegan Associates Bylaws:

<http://monheganassociates.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/bylaws2008-complete.pdf>

MAI Herbicide Policy:

https://monheganassociates.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/MAI_-HERBICIDE-USAGE-POLICYfinal-06272020.pdf