

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

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To: State Directors
Attention: SFMOs, External Affairs Chiefs

From: Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Subject: Fact Sheets

Attached are three fact sheets developed to assist you as you work with your state and local officials on wildland-urban community issues and grant programs.

In the past few months, DOI agencies began to work on development of a list of Wildland-Urban Interface communities and a subsequent project priority list for funding for FY 2002 and beyond. There has been considerable confusion and mis-communication about where the DOI program fits with other grant and cooperative programs, especially among some state officials and fire chiefs.

The attached fact sheet entitled "National Fire Plan and Community Assistance Programs" is a straightforward one page document that may help you as you work with state officials and local managers and fire departments. It will hopefully give your cooperators and partners a quick reference to the different programs available to assist in the many types of projects that have been identified.

Also attached for your use are two other fact sheets. "National Fire Plan-An Overview" was developed to help illustrate the major elements of the national plan. "Assistance Programs for Rural Fire Departments" is to help with rural and volunteer fire department partners.

A key to the success of the BLM and DOI programs for community assistance will be the active involvement, support, and agreement for the list of priority projects in each state. As part of achieving that goal, it will be necessary for us to help the key people at all levels understand the different programs and how they fit. Using tools such as the enclosed fact sheets is one step in this process. You are encouraged to reproduce and market them in a way that best meets your individual needs.

If you should have any questions or comments, please contact Dave Vickery at 208-387-5272.

Signed by:
Larry E. Hamilton
Director, Office of Fire and Aviation

Authenticated by:
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3 - Attachments

- 1 - National Fire Plan and Community Assistance Programs (1 p.)
- 2 - National Fire Plan-An Overview (2 pp.)
- 3 - Assistance Programs for Rural Fire Departments (1 p.)

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National Fire Plan and Community Assistance Programs

The National Fire Plan (www.fireplan.gov) addresses land health and fuel conditions that have evolved over many decades. The Plan reflects a long-term commitment based on cooperation and collaboration among Federal, state, tribal and local governments, and other partners, to increase firefighting capability and reduce the risk of wildland fire to people, property and natural resources. Five key points within the Plan help focus our efforts:

- *firefighting - to bolster firefighting resources;*
- *rehabilitation and restoration - to restore landscapes and rebuild communities damaged by wildfire;*
- *hazardous fuels reduction - to reduce the risks of fire;*
- *community assistance - to work with and ensure communities are protected from the risk of wildland fire (see below); and*
- *accountability - to establish adequate oversight and monitoring of results.*

Community Assistance

There are several components of community assistance including: wildland-urban interface communities at risk and rural fire assistance, which are Department of the Interior (BLM, NPS, BIA, FWS) programs; and state fire assistance, volunteer fire assistance, economic action programs, and community and private land assistance, which are Forest Service programs.

Wildland-Urban Interface Communities (Interior): In the 2001 appropriation, Congress directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to work with individual states and tribes to develop a list of communities in the wildland-urban interface at high risk from wildfire. This list helps guide decisions on project funding. The next step was for states and tribes to submit a prioritized list of hazardous fuel reduction projects in the wildland-urban interface near Interior-managed lands. **The deadline for project submissions in order to receive funding in 2002 is July 30, 2001. The projects will then be selected and prioritized by August 15 and funded when the 2002 Appropriation is passed.**

Rural Fire Assistance (Interior): The 2001 appropriation earmarked \$10 million for a Department of the Interior rural fire assistance program. This funding will enhance the fire protection capabilities of rural fire departments through training, equipment purchase and prevention work on a cost-shared basis.

State Fire Assistance (Forest Service): The Forest Service has had a program in place for years that allows part of its appropriation to be distributed to individual states to 1) provide technical and financial assistance to enhance readiness capability at the state and local levels; and 2) support fire reduction projects in the wildland-urban interface *on Federal (Forest Service-managed) or state land*. The 2001 appropriation for the Forest Service targets \$51 million for its state fire assistance program. This program is similar to Interior's Wildland-Urban Interface Communities Program intended to reduce

the risk of wildland fire to communities in the interface.

Volunteer Fire Assistance (Forest Service): Part of the funding the Forest Service distributes to the states (\$8 million in 2001) is targeted to volunteer fire departments to help improve communications, increase fire training, purchase protective fire clothing and firefighting equipment.

Economic Action Programs (Forest Service): The Forest Service's 2001 Appropriation sets aside \$12.5 million to work with local communities to identify, develop and expand economic opportunities related to traditionally underutilized wood products and to expand the use of wood removed through hazardous fuel reduction treatments.

Community and Private Land Assistance (Forest Service): This Forest Service funding (\$35 million in 2001) is used to replace facilities destroyed by fire, particularly fences, and support high-priority hazard mitigation projects. *These projects can be located on private land.*

Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program. (Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) U.S. Fire Administration (USFA))

This new 2001 program provides grant funding in the categories of Fire Prevention, Firefighting and Protective Equipment, Training, Vehicles and Wellness and Fitness. For information refer to www.usfa.fema.gov/grants/.

National Fire Plan - An Overview

Background

Seasoned fire managers expected the worst the summer of 2000, and their fears were realized early on when waves of thunderstorms began steadily rocking the West. Meanwhile, Southern states had still received little or no rain to end their wildland fire season. The result was widespread fires that were erratic, intense, and explosive. The fires not only threatened people and firefighters, but destroyed property and damaged natural resources.

In early August, President Clinton visited the Burgdorf Junction Fire, near McCall, Idaho, to get a firsthand look at the fire situation in the West. During that trip, President Clinton asked the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to develop recommendations on how to reduce the impacts of fire on rural communities and ensure sufficient firefighting resources for the future. Their response is contained in "Managing the Impacts of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment: A Report to the President in Response to the Wildfires of 2000," which is also known as the "National Fire Plan."

The National Fire Plan (www.fireplan.gov) focuses on five key points: 1) Firefighting - ensure firefighting resources are adequate; 2) Rehabilitation and Restoration - restore landscapes and rebuild communities; 3) Hazardous Fuel Reduction - invest in projects to reduce fire risks; 4) Community Assistance - work directly with communities; and 5) Accountability.

The National Fire Plan also recognizes the importance of treating areas with hazardous fuels prior to a fire starting rather than relying on suppression efforts alone, and that accomplishing this task is a long-term process.

Congress responded to the President's Report quickly and decisively by meeting the budget requests of the Forest Service and Department of the Interior wildland firefighting agencies. In all, the agencies received almost \$2.9 billion (\$1.9 for the Forest Service and \$979 million for Interior).

Implementing the National Fire Plan

Firefighting

Preparedness

The 2001 appropriation provides 100 percent of the funding necessary for firefighting agencies to respond to fires at their most efficient and safe level, while achieving resource management objectives and minimizing the cost of suppression and resource damage.

- The National Fire Plan includes a workforce development strategy, in which 8,253 new firefighters will be hired (4,381 for Forest Service and 3,872 for Interior). These numbers include hiring additional seasonal and new permanent staff in fire management and related positions. Some temporary employees' appointments will be converted to permanent as well. Most of the new jobs will be entry-level forestry aids or technician jobs assigned to firefighting positions, but some will be higher graded positions in fire management and related disciplines.
- The National Interagency Fire Center's web site contains links to all Federal wildland agency employment opportunity sites, and information on how to apply for these positions (www.nifc.gov).
- By June 15, Interior agencies expect to have 100 percent of the seasonal and temporary jobs and 92 percent of the permanent jobs filled.
- National and on-going local recruitment efforts have sought to reach a broad pool of potential applicants. The Departments have coordinated more than 30 job fairs nationally and more than 20,000 applications have been received.

Fire Facilities Maintenance and Construction

Adequate fire facilities are critical to efficient and safe fire operations. Funding was provided in the 2001 appropriation to construct and repair air tanker bases (tankers are critical to initial attack), crew facilities, engine houses and helitack bases. The Forest Service received nearly \$12 million to maintain and upgrade airtanker facilities across seven western states. These projects support the nationally shared airtanker fleet. The Forest Service also received about \$32 million for work on facilities in 24 states, while Interior received \$30 million for work on 50 facilities.

Equipment

Funding was targeted for additional equipment such as wildland firefighting engines, bulldozers, tractor plows, water/foam tenders and to contract more helicopters. Some of this equipment will not be received until 2002, depending upon its availability from manufacturers. The equipment will be positioned across the country, with the majority of it located in the West.

Attachment 2-1

Fire Science Research and Technology Dev.

The 2001 appropriation targeted \$26 million in funding for Forest Service research and development in firefighting, fire and smoke prediction, rehabilitation

methods, fuels treatment effectiveness and effects, and community impacts and protection. This research will help firefighters make critical safety decisions; guide deployment of firefighting forces to increase efficiency; and reduce damages to resources, people and property.

Funding was also doubled to \$16.6 million for the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP). Half of this funding comes from the Forest Service and half from Interior. Since 1998 the JFSP has been developing science-based, interagency approaches in fuels inventory and mapping, evaluation of fuels treatments, scheduling of fuels treatments, and monitoring of treatment effects and effectiveness.

Rehabilitation and Restoration

Total funding for rehabilitation and restoration work under the National Fire Plan is about \$246 million. Of that, the Forest Service will apply \$142 million toward 500 proposed projects in 14 western states, and Interior will use \$105 million for 167 projects on 1.3 million acres in eight states. Short-term rehabilitation projects will help prevent further damage to ecosystems and communities as a result of fire. Long-term restoration projects will help improve land unlikely to recover naturally from fire, prevent invasions of noxious weeds and exotic species, and reduce disease and bug infestations.

Hazardous Fuel Reduction

About \$400 million has been provided for fuels management and reduction to address dense wildland vegetation resulting from decades of wildfire suppression and fire exclusion on Federal lands. Activities will focus on wildland-urban interface areas to reduce the risks of fire to people and property. These projects will help support local communities by using local contractors and assistance. Treatments are planned on about 3.2 million acres (1.8 million on Forest Service and 1.4 million on Interior lands). An additional 395,000 acres of non-Federal land have been targeted for treatment by state and local fire organizations using funds appropriated through the National Fire Plan to the Forest Service State Fire Assistance program.

Community Assistance

Rural, Volunteer and State Fire Assistance

Safe and effective fire suppression in the wildland-urban interface demands close coordination between rural, local, state, tribal and Federal firefighting agencies. The 2001 appropriation earmarked \$10 million for a Department of the Interior rural fire assistance program. This funding will enhance the fire protection capabilities of rural fire departments through training, equipment purchase and prevention work on a cost-shared basis.

The Forest Service has had similar programs in place for many years. The 2001 appropriation for the Forest Service targets \$75.5 million for its state fire assistance program; \$13.3 million for its volunteer fire assistance

program; \$12.5 million for Economic Action Programs; and \$35 million for community and private land fire assistance.

Fire Prevention and Education

A critical element of the National Fire Plan is to help the public understand wildland fire and the challenges it presents where wildlands intermingle with urban and suburban lands.

FIREWISE, a program with a web site (www.firewise.org), publications, videos, and training events, provides educational programs and materials to help people create fire resistant homes and communities. Through the National Fire Plan, \$5 million has been targeted to support development and delivery of FIREWISE products and workshops.

Wildland Urban Interface Communities

In the 2001 appropriation, Congress directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and Interior to work with individual states and tribes to develop a list of communities in the wildland-urban interface at high risk from wildfire. A list of about 4,200 communities was published in the Federal Register January 4, 2001. Since then, several more states have added communities to the list and the total number has grown to 22,000. Of these, 11,464 communities are located in the vicinity of Federal land, with 9,457 near land managed by the Departments of the Interior or Agriculture. The remaining 2,004 are near land managed by other Federal agencies, such as Departments of Defense and Energy. The states and tribes are currently in the process of submitting hazardous fuel reduction and community education and action projects in the wildland-urban interface on Interior-managed lands. This project list will guide implementation of the national fuels reduction program in fiscal year 2002, and provide a preliminary list of projects for 2003.

Accountability

In the 2001 appropriation, Congress included reporting requirements to ensure current, accessible information on the status of national fire plan implementation to legislators, the administration, states and the public. In January 2001, the Departments of Agriculture and Interior submitted to Congress an Action Plan – how they plan to meet the goals of the National Fire Plan – and a Financial Plan – how they plan to spend the funds appropriated under Title IV of the appropriation.

Attachment 2-2

Assistance Programs for Rural Fire Departments

Department of the Interior

- The rural fire department (RFD) assistance program for DOI was established as a pilot program and funded \$10 million in the 2001 Appropriation Act. (See www.fireplan.gov.)
- The funding allows DOI agencies to help enhance the fire protection capability of rural fire districts by funding training, equipment and fire prevention work. Departments can receive up to \$20,000 for communities with populations of less than 10,000.
- This program will help increase the safety and efficiency of fire activities in the wildland-urban interface where Federal, rural and volunteer firefighters work side by side to fight fire.
- RFDs must contact their nearest DOI agency office, BLM, NPS, BIA or FWS. They can ask for the fire management officer for specific local rural fire assistance information.

USDA Forest Service

- The Forest Service has had a rural fire assistance program in place for many years. Through its program, the Forest Service allocates money to each individual state through the State Forester. Each state has a different process for disbursement.
- To find out about the program in each state, contact the State Forester. The State Forester list, with phone numbers, is located on the web site: <http://www.stateforesters.org/SFlist.html>
- The Forest Service received \$8.3 million for rural fire department assistance in the 2001 appropriation.

Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA)

- FEMA has just announced a new \$100 million rural fire assistance grant program.
- They are currently developing the applications and award process. To receive updates on the program's progress, please go to: www.usfa.fema.gov and click on "email list." Then follow the instructions.
- More information on the program (criteria, purpose, etc.) can be found at the usfa.fema.gov web site.