

NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

Key Point 4 – Community Assistance

Questions & Answers

- Q. Why is there a Community Assistance component of the National Fire Plan?
- A. Congress and the Administration agreed with the recommendations of the USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior that community involvement is a critical element in restoring damaged landscapes and reducing fire hazards near homes and communities. Through the National Fire Plan, Congress provided \$176.6 million for use in working directly with communities to ensure adequate protection.
- Q. What funding is provided through the Community Assistance Key Point, and what programs does the funding support?
- A. Congress appropriated \$10 million for the Department of the Interior for rural fire assistance. In addition, for the USDA Forest Service, Congress appropriated \$75.5 million for state fire assistance, \$13.3 million for volunteer fire assistance; \$12.5 million for Economic Action Programs, and \$35 million for Community and Private Land Fire Assistance. These funds complement additional dollars appropriated to regular USDA Forest Service cooperative programs.
- A. What is the Rural Fire Assistance component?
- Q. The Department of the Interior's Rural Fire Assistance Program is a pilot effort to enhance fire protection capabilities of rural fire districts. Safe and effective protection in the wildland urban interface demands close coordination between local, state, tribal and Federal firefighting resources. The program supports training, equipment purchase, and prevention activities, on a cost-shared basis.
- Q. How will Rural Fire Assistance projects be chosen?
- A. The criteria for selection of projects follows:
- A Cooperative Fire Agreement exists with an Interior agency/bureau.
 - The rural fire department serves a community with a population of 10,000 or less.
 - The funding request is limited to training, equipment, and prevention activities.

- The rural fire department must cost-share at a minimum of 10% (including in-kind services).
- The rural fire department serves a community in the wildland urban interface.

Q. What is the State Fire Assistance Program component?

A. The State Fire Assistance Program is a long-standing program of cooperation with state fire organizations. The program builds shared fire preparedness and firefighting capabilities at the state level. The program also funds hazard mitigation projects and prevention campaigns.

Q. What types of activities are supported through State Fire Assistance?

A. The State Fire Assistance Program provides training, equipment and technical assistance to state fire organizations. It supports activities in the wildland urban interface where the greatest population is affected and focuses on hazard mitigation projects targeted to reduce property loss, lessen fuel hazards, and increases public awareness and citizen driven solutions in rural communities. It also supports important education and public information activities, such as the FIREWISE workshops, and Smokey Bear information and education campaigns.

Q. What is the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program component?

A. The Volunteer Fire Assistance Program is another long-standing program of cooperation with states, to provide technical and financial resources to rural fire departments. The program supports the organization, training, and equipment needs of fire departments in communities of less than 10,000.

Q. What are the Economic Action Programs?

A. The Economic Action Programs address the needs of rural communities impacted by changing land management policies and practices in adjacent forest and range lands. The programs focus on building community capacity, for planning, economic development, and resource stewardship.

Q. What types of activities will the Economic Action Programs support through the National Fire Plan?

A. Through the National Fire Plan, the Economic Action Programs will support technology implementation and state capacity building, through multi-region projects to provide market support through technology assistance, and through support at the state and community level to strengthen marketing and utilization capabilities. The Economic Action

Program also will provide grants to high risk areas – where potential for wildfire is greatest – to support community planning, market development and expansion, and support increasing valuation of the products of hazardous fuel treatment projects.

- Q. What is included in the Community and Private Land Fire Assistance component?
- A. The Community and Private Land Fire Assistance include five main elements. They are: fence reconstruction in areas affected by wildfires in 2000 (\$9 million), hazard mitigation projects to reduce risk on non-Federal lands (\$6 million), multi-resource stewardship planning on private land to improve forest health and reduce fire risk (\$7 million), pilot projects to demonstrate potential biomass utilization enterprises (\$8 million), and community planning for fire protection (\$5 million).
- Q. Why does the National Fire Plan include focused support in and around wildland urban interface communities?
- A. As the nation's demographics change, developed areas and individual homesites increasingly extend into forested areas. These areas offer unique attributes, but also may be areas of greater risk to wildland fire. The National Fire Plan recognized the potential impacts in these wildland urban interface areas and focuses many activities accordingly.
- Q. How does the National Fire Plan address the needs of communities in wildland urban interface areas?
- A. In addition to the programs described above, hazardous fuel reduction activities also will be focused in and around wildland urban interface areas.
- Q. How will communities be identified, in and around which these activities will be focused?
- A. Congress directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to consult with states and tribes in the developing a list of urban wildlife interface communities with the vicinity of Federal lands, including Indian trust and restricted lands, that are in areas of high risk from wildfire. A preliminary list of communities was published in the Federal Register January 4, 2001. It also included preliminary criteria the two Departments will use to evaluate risk and rank communities.
- Q. Is this the final list?

A. Since state governments and tribes used different criteria in developing the list of communities, this list is only a starting point. It will be updated with additional information from states and tribes. Some states were unable to supply any information in time for the January 4 Federal Register Notice.

Q. How will the list be finalized and what is the timeframe?

A. The Department of the Interior and the USDA Forest Service are working with the Western Governors Association and other groups to develop the approach to refining the list of communities, and to identify and prioritize specific treatment projects focused on Federal land. Development of the final list will be coordinated closely with states, tribes, local leaders and other interested parties. A comprehensive Report on High Risk Communities is due to Congress May 1, 2001.