

NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

Key Point 3 -- Hazardous Fuel Reduction

Questions & Answers

Q. What strategy does the National Fire Plan include to reduce fires on forest and range lands across the landscape?

A. A key element of the National Fire Plan strategy to reduce wildland fires is the treatment and reduction of hazardous levels of vegetative fuel. This is combined with research into new fuel treatment technologies, and the prevention and control of undesirable invasive species.

Q. How much funding is for hazardous fuel reduction and how will it be used?

A. Appropriations for hazardous fuel reductions include \$205.6 million for the USDA Forest Service, and \$195.4 million for the Department of the Interior. The funding provides for fuel reduction and management treatments, to address dense forest vegetation resulting from decades of wildfire suppression and fire exclusion on forest and range lands. Activities will focus on wildland urban interface areas to reduce risks to people and property, as well as forested areas at high risk to catastrophic fire.

Q. Why is the Federal government paying more attention to reducing hazardous fuels?

A. Reducing hazardous fuels on public land is not new. Federal land managing agencies have been conducting this type of work for almost four decades. What's different is that because of the severity of last year's wildfires, the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior are intensifying efforts by starting more projects and working more closely with Federal agencies, tribal and state governments, and rural areas. Also, Congress has provided more funding for hazardous fuel treatments than in the past, allowing the agencies to accomplish more work.

Q. Will other entities be involved in hazardous fuel reduction?

A. Yes, joint fuel reduction projects with states, tribal governments, and other cooperators will be implemented. Treatments will focus in and around communities identified collaboratively with states, tribes, and other agencies.

Q. How many acres will be treated to reduce hazardous fuels?

- A. Treatments are planned on approximately 3.2 million acres of Federal lands (1.8 million acres treated by the Forest Service and 1.4 million acres treated by the Department of the Interior). Treatments are also planned on 395,000 acres of non-Federal lands by state and local fire organizations, using funds appropriated through the National Fire Plan to the Forest Service State Fire Assistance program.
- Q. What is the basis for the expanded hazardous fuel treatment program?
- A. The hazardous fuel treatment program relies heavily on the September 2000 report, Protecting People and Sustaining Resources in Fire-Adapted Ecosystems, a Cohesive Strategy. The Cohesive Strategy lays out a 15-year plan to reduce wildland fire threats and restore forest health.
- Q. How does the National Fire Plan address research and development relative to hazardous fuel reduction?
- A. Through the National Fire Plan, funding for the interagency Joint Fire Science Program is increased to \$16 million total (\$8 million for each Department). The funding will focus on local and regional needs that pose barriers to fuels management as well as expanding research on fuel management and harvesting treatments, fire behavior models, and tools for assessing social and economic impacts of fire. An additional \$16 million is appropriated for the Forest Service to conduct wildfire related research and development. A portion of this also supports projects that address hazardous fuel reduction and treatments.
- Q. How does forest health management play a role in the National Fire Plan?
- A. The National Fire Plan provides an additional \$12 million for the USDA Forest Service to prevent and control invasive species. This includes technical assistance for management and control of native and non-native forest insects and diseases, including non-native weeds, evaluation of forest and tree health after fires, suppression of bark beetles that increase in forest stands weakened by fire, and protection of wildland urban interface communities.