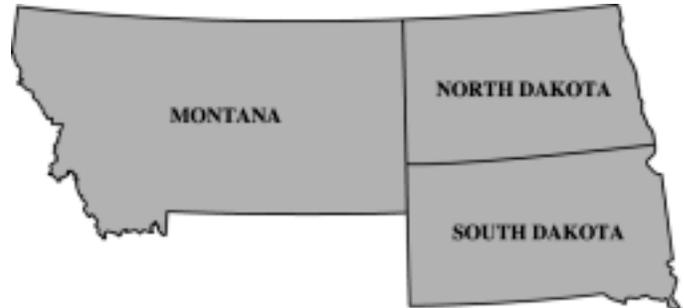




Fire Management Planning and Funding

WHERE ARE WE NOW?

- \$ The 2000 fire season and additional Congressional funding have prompted several changes in our fire program.
- \$ We are updating fire management plans to reduce the risk and cost of severe wildfires. This will help us identify opportunities to use prescribed fire and mechanical treatments to reduce hazardous fuels and meet other resource management objectives.
- \$ Montana/Dakotas BLM released a fire management plan and an environmental assessment on August 10, 2001. We are revising the document based on public comments and policy direction to comply with the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and the National Fire Plan.
- \$ These updated plans will be used in the Fire Management Activity Plan (FMAP) to identify statewide fire management objectives, staffing and equipment needs, and anticipated costs. The FMAP helps us identify our most efficient level (MEL).
- \$ We are now hiring staff to meet 100 percent of our MEL and are focusing on contracting with local entities.
- \$ We are working with our state, local and federal partners to prioritize communities at risk.
- \$ We developed a process to distribute funds to local/rural fire departments.



HOW DID WE GET HERE?

- \$ A combination of dry, overgrown fuels and dry, hot weather throughout the West in the summer of 2000 led to what some have declared one of the most severe wildland fire seasons in U.S. history.
- \$ The BLM is responsible for wildland fire protection on more than 8 million acres of public land in Montana/Dakotas.
- \$ BLM also protects more than 600,000 acres of other federal and state lands in eastern Montana.

WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE?

- \$ We are considering how to best manage wildland fires and use prescribed fires and mechanical treatments to reduce hazardous fuels while achieving resource objectives.
- \$ We must also meet the expectations of the Congressional legislation which requires us to focus efforts in five key areas:
 1. Firefighting
 - \$ We are continuing to hire employees to reach 100 percent of our MEL.
 - \$ We have added four heavy engines (two in Miles City, two in Lewistown); a single engine airtanker in Lewistown; and air attack/detection aircraft in Lewistown.
 - \$ We will start to upgrade or build new fire facilities in Bridger, Ekalaka and Jordan.
 - \$ We completed facilities in Miles City and Lewistown, and began planning for a new regional interagency fire cache in Billings.
 2. Rehabilitation & Restoration
 - \$ We have completed post-fire rehabilitation on all BLM acres burned in 2000 that require it. Some projects are multi-year and will continue until restoration is complete.
 3. Hazardous Fuel Reduction
 - \$ We are expanding our fuels/prescribed fire program and identifying communities most at risk from wildland fire.
 - \$ With Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation (DNRC) and other agencies with fire responsibility, we will plan and implement projects to protect those communities.
 4. Community Assistance
 - \$ Montana has more than 400 recognized volunteer and rural fire departments.
 - \$ We coordinated with DNRC, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Forest Service, North Dakota Forest Service, and Fish and Wildlife Service to distribute \$670,000 for rural fire assistance in Montana and the Dakotas in FY01. All 56 Montana counties received funding. We will distribute an additional \$670,000 in FY02.
 - \$ We applied available funding to the most pressing equipment and training needs.
 5. Accountability
 - \$ Nationally, the BLM has established reporting procedures and tracking systems to identify what work we are accomplishing with National Fire Plan funds. We make quarterly reports to Congress.



WHO ELSE IS CONCERNED?

- \$ Public interest in the fire program peaks during the fire season, and is more intense when property and structures are threatened.
- \$ We have also received considerable interest from those seeking employment.
- \$ Local and county governments are very interested in our fire program.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Contact Tom Boatner, Fire Management Officer, (406) 896-2914; John Thompson, Planning Specialist, Montana State Office, (406) 896-5030; Pat Mullaney, Fire Management Planner, (406) 896-2915; Jim Gray, Fuels Program Manager, (406) 896-2911; or visit our website at <http://www.mt.blm.gov/fire/fire.html>.

