To: Forest Service Forest Supervisors, CRGNSA Manager, and Regional Directors, and Bureau of Land Management District Managers

Subject: Using Contracting and Assistance to Support the National Fire Plan

Enclosed is a letter from the Department of Agriculture (USDA) and the Department of Interior (DOI) clarifying national direction for contracting goals for hazardous fuels treatments. Specifically, the direction dated November 5, 2002, states:

“DOI’s goal is to contract for 50 percent of all approved project funding for fuels treatments and emergency stabilization, rehabilitation and restoration work by FY 2004.”

“USDA Forest Service’s goal is to contract 50 percent of approved project funding for mechanical treatments and 20 percent of approved project funding for prescribed burn, including preparation and monitoring, by fiscal year 2005.”

On February 5, 2003, we received additional direction from the Department of Interior for DOI agencies. This direction states:

“Our goal is to increase the use of contracting to support the National Fire Plan mission of hazardous fuels reduction and rehabilitation and to stimulate local economies. Our performance target is to contract for 35% of funded projects for fuels treatment and burned area rehabilitation projects in FY 2003 and 50% in FY 2004.”

We are pleased that we have already achieved high levels of contracting for hazardous fuels reduction; however, we must increase our contracting in all phases of fuel treatments. This will require that each of you contribute to the attainment of these goals.

As you read this letter from the Departments’, you will note several other requirements that will take your commitment to achieve. Be assured the National Fire Plan (NFP) interagency contracting team is positioned to assist you. Each agency’s Acquisition Management groups are available and ready to go. You can find your lead NFP Contracting Officer at http://www.or.blm.gov/procurement/geog_area.htm.

With the recent passage of the FY 2003 Interior Appropriations, you should be positioned to award contracts within the next couple months. It is more critical than ever to have these contracts awarded quickly.

We appreciate the effort you have all put into contracting more of this work, and we know you will be able to meet the
goals of the Departments by FY2004 and FY2005.

If you have questions or need further clarification on the Departments’ letter of direction, please contact Bonnie Wood, NFP Executive Director, at 503-808-2701.

/s/ Thelma J. Strong (for)  /s/ Cary A. Osterhaus (for)
LINDA GOODMAN  ELAINE M. BRONG
Regional Forester  State Director
Forest Service  Bureau of Land Management
Region 6  OR/WA

Authenticated by
Mary O'Leary
Management Assistant

Enclosures - 2
Joint Contracting Memo (Nov 8, 02) (2pp)
NFP Acquisition Memo (Feb 02) (3pp)

cc:  BLM Distribution
WO  WO (FA-100) - 1
Memorandum

To: Assistant Secretaries, LMM, F&WP
Commissioner of Indian Affairs
Bureau Directors, BLM, FWS, NPS
Bureau Assistant Directors for Administration, BLM, FWS, NPS, BIA
Bureau Fire Directors
Bureau Procurement Chiefs, BLM, FWS, NPS, BIA

From: P. Lynn Scarlett
Assistant Secretary - Policy, Management and Budget

Subject: National Fire Plan Acquisition Workload Accomplishment

Our goal is to increase the use of contracting to support the National Fire Plan mission of hazardous fuels reduction and rehabilitation and to stimulate local economies. Our performance target is to contract for 35% of funded projects for fuels treatment and burned area rehabilitation projects in FY 2003 and 50% in FY 2004. Interior fire plan contracting increased from approximately $65 million in FY 2001 to over $86 million in FY 2002. These data represent 17% of available funds in FY 2001 and 21% in FY 2002.

I was recently advised that as much as $50 million of fire plan funding that was available for on-the-ground project work as "left on the table" in FY 2002. Projects that should have been awarded were not due to a variety of reasons, including a long and busy fire season, late funding approval, shortage of contracting staff and/or trained contracting officer's representatives and shortage of resources staff for project planning. To ensure meeting our stated goals for hazardous fuels reduction and emergency stabilization and for contracting the work, we are considering options such as:

- Moving fire plan contracting workload, and related staff positions, from buying offices that have not performed well to those that have, or to franchise buying units at MMS or NBC.
- Creating a fire plan contracting center of excellence to award specific inter-agency contracts and to handle all other actions over a given dollar threshold.
- Hiring one or more Governmentwide Acquisition Interns to the program for each bureau, paid by fire plan funds, to be used to backfill behind journeyman procurement professionals who can then be detailed to critical fire plan contracting work.

I am asking that each fire plan bureau review their FY 2002 fire plan contracting accomplishments and determine the following:

- How much FY 2002 fuels and rehab project funding was available for contracting but was not awarded?
- How much of that funding was awarded in the first quarter of FY 2003?
What were the primary reasons for the failure to complete these awards in FY 2002?
What is being done at the bureau level to ensure success in achieving fire plan contracting goals?

Your resulting report addressing the above issues should be provided to Debra Sonderman, Director, Office of Acquisition and Property Management, by February 28, 2003. Your staff may direct their questions on this issue to Wiley Horsley of her staff at 202-208-3347 or by e-mail at wiley_horsley@ios.doi.gov.

cc: Debra Sonderman, PAM
    Tim Hartzell, OWFC
    John Trezise, POB