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To:  
Forest Service Forest Supervisors; Bureau of Land Management District Managers; Oregon Department of Forestry Area Directors, District Foresters and Association District Managers

Subject:  Resolving Fire Issues from 2002

We tasked key fire management personnel to explore the interagency issues that resulted from the 2002 fire season in the state of Oregon. We suggested that physical realities such as fuel conditions and wildland-urban interface may give rise to issues and should be considered, but the bulk of the effort should focus on areas such as availability and use of shared resources, policies and decision-making. The task was to be completed by February 1, 2003, and we approved an action plan to remedy issues prior to fire season 2003. Many action items are being satisfied at the state level, but several items must be resolved locally. We believe that the action plan will improve performance and remedy issues in time for the 2003 fire season.

It is our intention to be more engaged at the executive level in fire management activities for 2003. We will meet with the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group (PNWCG) Steering Committee prior to fire season and are considering a state-wide interagency Line Officer Team to promote leadership, mentoring and interagency understanding in fire management. We similarly expect field Agency Administrators to meet regularly before and after fire season to ensure that emergency response is smooth and efficient. It is especially important to work on interagency issues when they occur locally. We can offset poor interagency relations if we deal swiftly with problems when they occur and elevate them only if they cannot be resolved locally.

We expect you to work with interagency cooperators to satisfy the following items prior to June 15, 2003:

- Discuss differences in fire protection objectives between agencies at the local level with the goal of interagency effectiveness and efficiency through collaboration. Single agency strategies affect adjacent lands. Agency Administrators and Fire Managers must discuss:
  - Similarities and differences in protection direction provided by Oregon Forest Laws (Chapter 477, 526) and local Land Management Plans.
  - Location, access and specific considerations of protected lands under your jurisdiction.

- Preferences for:
  - Direct vs. indirect suppression strategies
  - Use of dozers in suppression actions
  - Night suppression operations
  - Use of wildland fire for resource benefits

- Describe state laws and practices regarding private landowner slash treatment to local federal Agency Administrators. Describe the process for “notices of additional hazard” and how extra protection is applied. Consider improved ways to decrease fire hazard from untreated slash.

- Re-assess draw down of initial attack resources on each unit. We expect you to hold necessary home unit resources in

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place for local initial attack purposes. Work locally with cooperators to maintain adequate interagency initial attack forces. How will mutual aid between units be accomplished?

- Consider local opportunities to use private, local, state and federal resources in a community based protection system. This could include creative use of under-utilized resources such as: rural fire departments and private landowner resources.

- How are local entities coordinating to develop National Fire Plan Community Protection Plans?

- All government land management personnel have a responsibility to participate or support fire suppression efforts. What essential functions cannot be compromised on each unit? The new application of the Resource Ordering and Status System (ROSS) technology this year will identify where qualified people are located so that shortage category resources can be more easily filled.

- What will your local process be for initiating local Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) groups when large fires occur? Who will participate and who will provide the facilitation/coordination?

- Discuss options and preferences for supplemental fire line agreements, and ensure that they will be reviewed often and updated as needed. What agency fiscal experts need to be involved in developing and approving the agreements?

Fire sizes and intensities are growing because of increased hazardous fuels in fire dependent ecosystems. The public expects us to work closely and cooperatively to deal with growing wildfire threats. We appreciate your efforts to coordinate locally on fire issues and will be providing oversight to ensure that these items are fully covered.

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