

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

**Forest
Service**

R-6

**OR/
WA**

**Bureau of
Land
Management**

**United States
Department of
Interior**

Reply Refer To: 5150(FS) / 2824(BLM) (OR-934) P

Date: March 27, 2003

EMS TRANSMISSION 03/31/2003

BLM-Information Bulletin No. OR-2003-115

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

Subject: FY 2004 Fuel Treatment Program Priorities

In FY 2004 we will continue to emphasize Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) treatments, mechanical treatments, that will produce by-products, and contracting fuels treatment work. Planning now for these priorities will ensure your ability to meet the goals of the *10-Year Implementation Plan* next year.

Enclosed are letters from the Department of Interior (DOI) and the Forest Service (FS). These letters clearly show that the priorities for FY 2004 are similar for the two agencies, with the exception of contracting goals. The 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, with a FY 2003 goal of 35 percent of funded projects for fuels treatments and burned area rehabilitation projects. Forest Service goals are to contract 50 percent of all approved project funding for mechanical treatments and 20 percent of approved project funding for prescribed burn treatments, including preparation and monitoring by FY 2005.

Specifically, the National Fuels Treatment Priorities will apply to all projects.

- Funding will be targeted on a priority basis to the WUI and areas in condition classes 2 or 3 in fire regimes I, II, and III with highest risk-reduction potential. These priorities are consistent with Goals Two and Three of the *10-Year Implementation Plan*.
- WUI projects should give priority to communities at greatest risk of wildland fire, and where communities are contributing community and private dollars as well as volunteer efforts to reduce catastrophic fire risks.

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- Priority should be given to mechanical treatments that will produce by-products (small diameter trees, biomass, etc.) that can be utilized. Mechanical treatments should be conducted where on-site conditions are conducive to their use and land use policies do not conflict. This is consistent with Goal Four of the *10-Year Implementation Plan*.
- Prescribed burning will be used when weather and resource conditions permit, where mechanical treatments are not appropriate, and as maintenance treatments following mechanical work.
- Contracted fuels treatment work should receive preference over work performed by the federal workforce. Our goal for FY 2004 is to contract out 50 percent of the allocated funding. Wherever possible, projects should use third-party contracting that supports rural community stability. This is consistent with Congressional direction and Goal Four of the *10-Year Implementation Plan*.

Your relationships with local communities regarding the National Fire Plan (NFP) have been enhanced in the past few years. You must continue to build on these relationships and strive to expand your collaboration with

local communities. Treatment projects should first be identified by federal agency staff, in collaboration with local communities. Collaboration takes time; we must start early.

By April 1, 2004, the NFP Grant Team will have tentative selections of the grant projects for FY 2004. You will be notified of these tentative selections, which will allow you to work with the grantee to ensure implementation early in FY 2004.

You must also collaborate with your local communities in defining the fuels treatment priorities for your area earlier this year than in previous years. The staffs in the State Office and Regional Office are already working with your fuels planners to populate the data base for the FY 2004 fuels treatment priorities. These data bases must be populated by April 1, 2003, in order to meet the National Office deadlines of May 1, 2003.

State Office and Regional Office staffs are also developing the framework of Community Fire Protection Plans/Community Fire Plans/Community Assessment and Mitigation Plans. (Currently, there are many names floating around for similar work). When drafted, this framework will be shared with the Pacific Northwest Wildfire Coordinating Group and your staffs for input before it is finalized. We know this will be a useful tool for you in assisting communities in the development of fire risk assessments, prioritization of fuels treatment areas, and future grant requests.

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We know the demands on your time are many; however, community collaboration is a cornerstone of the *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan*, and a cornerstone for relationships that we have talked with each of you about throughout the year.

Our staffs are ready to support you in all aspects of meeting these important NFP goals. Please call Erik Christiansen at 503-808-6592 or Tim Rich at 503-808-2934, for FASTRACS issues; Barbara Kennedy at 503-808-2323 with your grant questions; and Bonnie Wood at 503-808-2701 with NFP questions or for other assistance.

/s/Thelma J. Strong (for)
LINDA GOODMAN
Regional Forester
Region 6
Forest Service

/s/ Cary A. Osterhaus (for)
ELAINE M. BRONG
State Director
Oregon/Washington
Bureau of Land Management

Authenticated by
Mary O'Leary
Management Assistant

2 Enclosures

- 1 - [DOI Memo dated 01/14/2003](#) re: FY 2004 Fuels Treatment Program Priorities (2pp)
- 2 - [Forest Service Memo dated 01/14/2003](#) re: FY 2004 Fuel Treatment Program Priorities (3pp)

cc:
Monty Bell
Bonnie Wood
Tim Rich

BLM Distribution
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OR-952 (Robert Heaton) - 1



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

JAN 14 2003

Memorandum

To: Acting Assistant Secretary, Indian Affairs
Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, National Park Service
Director, Fish and Wildlife Service

From: Secretary 

Subject: FY 2004 Fuels Treatment Program Priorities

Reducing hazardous fuels on federal lands plays a vital role in achieving the goals of the President's *Healthy Forests Initiative*, the *10-year Comprehensive strategy*, and the *National Fire Plan*. Reducing risk to our firefighters, communities, and municipal watersheds, and restoring the health of our forests and rangelands are the central themes of these initiatives. Of the three parts of the wildland fire triad – oxygen, heat and fuel – land managers can impact only fuel effectively.

Department of the Interior employees responsible for the fuels treatment program have made significant and noteworthy progress. In FY 2002, nearly 1.1 million acres of hazardous fuels reduction were accomplished. This is by far the largest effort ever mounted by the Department. These results are especially impressive given the extensive drought conditions across the country and the severity of the past fire season. This work was done at the same time planning occurred for treating another 1.1 million acres in FY 2003.

Equally impressive are changes that you have made to the way we plan and conduct our fuels treatment program. These changes include:

- Accelerating project selection
- Increasing collaboration among the federal agencies and with our many state, tribal, and local partners.
- Planning across administrative boundaries
- Establishing a goal to contract at least 50% of allocated fuels treatment funding
- Committing to a more systematic approach to project selection

To address the magnitude of problems in forests and rangelands requires setting clear priorities and future direction for the fuels treatment program. This past summer provided vivid evidence of the consequences of fuels buildup coupled with the spread of insect, disease, and invasive plant infestations, and was compounded by severe drought. Colorado, Arizona and Oregon recorded their largest fires in the last century. Moreover, problems linger long after the last ember is out. Soils and wind erosion, water quality degradation and loss of fish and wildlife habitat will plague many areas for years to come. Although we are now treating in excess of one million acres, we must accelerate our efforts and ensure that we are targeting the right acres.

The following National Fuel Treatment Priorities will apply to all projects:

- Funding will be targeted on a priority basis to the Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) and areas in condition classes 2 or 3 in fire regimes I, II or III with highest risk-reduction potential. These priorities are consistent with Goals Two and Three of the 10-Year Implementation Plan.
- WUI projects should give priority to communities and greatest risk of wildland fire and where communities are contributing community and private dollars as well as volunteer efforts to reduce catastrophic fire risks.
- Priority should be given to mechanical treatments that will produce by-products (small diameter trees, biomass, etc.) that can be utilized. Mechanical treatments should be conducted where on-site conditions are conducive to their use and land-use policies do not conflict. This is consistent with Goal Four of the 10-Year Implementation Plan.
- Prescribed burning will be used when weather and resource conditions permit, where mechanical treatments are not appropriate, and as maintenance treatments following mechanical work.
- Contracted fuels treatment work should receive preference over work performed by the federal workforce. Our goal for FY 2004 is to contract out 50% of allocated funding. Wherever possible, projects should use third-party contracting that supports rural community stability. This is consistent with Congressional direction and Goal Four of the *10-Year Implementation Plan*.

In addition to treating the right acres in the right sequence across the landscape, we must continue the collaborative relationships that guided the FY 2003 project selections. Projects should first be identified by federal agency staff, in collaboration with local communities. Stakeholders should be engaged early in the planning process to assist us in defining the fuels problem, finding innovative solutions and identifying post-treatment objectives.

To improve the effectiveness and efficiency of fuels treatment projects, we must also complete the selection of fuels treatment projects much earlier than the past. Starting immediately, final project lists must be submitted to the Department's Office of Wildland Fire Coordination by May 1st for the coming fiscal year. The month of May was chosen so that work on selecting and preparing fuels treatment projects would be done largely outside of the intense fire seasons that usually occurs June through September.

I am confident that our line managers, resource and fuels specialist, and support personnel will continue to work together to achieve the goals of the President's *Healthy Forest Initiative*, the *10-Year Implementation Plan* and the *National Fire Plan*. Again, thank you for your professional dedication and your continued commitment to healthy forests and rangelands.

Any questions regarding this memorandum should be directed to the Department's Fuels Coordinator, Allen Fitzsimmons.

cc. Assistant Secretary, Land and Mineral Management
Assistant Secretary, Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Director, Office of Wildland Fire Coordination