

Memorandum

March 20, 2002

**To: Bureau Directors (BIA, BLM, FWS, NPS), FS Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry, FS Deputy Chief, National Forest System
cc: Bureau Fire Directors, Resource Directors**

**From: *f* Tim Hartzell, USDOJ Director, Office of Wildland Fire Coordination, *Tim Hartzell*
Bob Leaverton, USDA Forest Service National Fire Plan Office *Bob Leaverton***

Subject: Fuel Treatment Program Development and Collaboration Process

The Department of the Interior and the USDA Forest Service are committed to working together to accomplish community protection and ecosystem maintenance and restoration. These agencies along with other Federal, State, Tribal and local partners will work within a collaborative process to ensure effective fuel treatment efforts. This collaborative process will be consistent with direction provided in the joint USDA Forest Service/DOI document, "Restoring Fire-Adapted Ecosystems on Federal Lands – A Cohesive Strategy for Protecting People and Sustaining Natural Resources," hereafter referred to as the Federal Cohesive Strategy, and in the USDA Forest Service/DOI/Western Governors' Association document, "A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment – 10 Year Comprehensive Strategy," hereafter referred to as the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy.

The agencies recognize that fuel treatments must be coordinated across ownerships to effectively protect communities and restore and maintain ecosystems. The purpose of this process is to:

- Establish a standardized process for DOI Bureaus and the Forest Service to work with appropriate State, Tribal, and local level partners to identify and coordinate fuels treatment projects in high risk areas.
- Encourage the development of multi-year landscape level fuel treatment plans across ownership boundaries.
- Facilitate prioritization of treatments that meet the goals of community protection as well as ecosystem maintenance and restoration.

Key aspects of the collaborative fuel treatment program development process:

- New budget year fuel treatment projects will be selected by September 1 of each year.**
- Federal, State, Tribal and local partners will convene to develop common plans that utilize all proposed agency treatment activities and that meet the agencies' objectives. These plans will place priority on high risk areas, reduce present or future unwanted fire effects, and promote programmatic efficiency and treatment effectiveness. The level of collaboration will be consistent with the complexity of land ownership patterns, resource management issues, and the number of interested stakeholders. These groups will:
 - Identify planned goals at the local/State levels to focus priorities, landscapes, and projects.
 - Ensure treatment implementation is sequenced; initial treatments will be planned near values to be protected with subsequent treatments building on these accomplishments to widen the protection buffer and/or to expand the landscape effects. These groups will meet to:

- Develop plans and propose activities for the next year based upon budget projections.
 - Amend plans and adjust activities for the current year based on approved budget levels.
- ❑ Coordinated projects to create landscape change in high risk areas for both wildland/urban interface and ecosystem health will be given priority over disconnected small scale projects which may not affect significant change.
 - ❑ Plan development utilizes priority criteria listed in the Federal Cohesive Strategy.
 - ❑ This process structures, standardizes, and documents the necessary collaborative development of the fuel treatment program.
 - ❑ Collaboration and cooperation occur at all levels and ensure that Federal agency heads, State Foresters, Tribal officials, and other interested parties are involved in project development and prioritization.
 - ❑ Project implementation issues such as technical and operational support, resource sharing, burn day scheduling, etc., will be coordinated among Federal, State, Tribal and local partners.

The Forest Service and the bureaus of the Department of Interior have established coordinated process steps and timeframes to meet the goals of this memo.

We see this as an opportunity to both enhance Federal, State and local partnerships and improve the effectiveness of hazard mitigation treatments on the landscape.

The following table illustrates the process steps, responsible organizational levels, and associated timeframes involved in the fuel treatment program development and collaboration process agreed to by the Forest Service and DOI Bureaus. This process does not circumvent any agency specific budget processes which are documented in other memoranda particular to each agency. All agencies have synchronized the critical steps and agree on the criteria to be used in program development.

Forest Service and DOI Fuel Treatment Selection Process		
Process Steps	Responsibility	Timeframe (Due Date)
<p>DOI Bureau and Forest Service Regional allocations of hazardous fuel reduction funds are determined annually at the national level. Distributions are based on criteria from the Federal Cohesive strategy and include but may not be limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fire management workload; • Departure from historical fuel conditions and fire occurrence; • Risk to communities (for wildland/urban interface projects); • Risk to ecosystems; • Benefits that extend beyond treatment areas; • Potential for unwanted wildland fire to cause irreversible damage to communities; ecosystems, or historical and cultural resources; • Projects that span multiple agency and ownership boundaries with broad interagency as well as non-governmental organizations and community participation; • Multi-year projects based on current land use and fire management plans, collaboration with federal, state, and tribal interagency partners, and • Prior performance in the hazardous fuels program. 	<p>Department of the Interior (OWFC) staff, Forest Service Fire and Aviation Management staff, bureau offices in consultation with National Office level - Bureau Directors , FS and DOI Fuel Treatment Coordinators, FS and DOI Budget Coordinators</p>	<p>During the next and all future fiscal year budget development cycles</p>
<p>Forest Service adjusts database to reflect current fiscal year allocation and program emphasis.</p>	<p>Regional Offices/National Forests</p>	<p>4/1 current year</p>
<p>Forest Service units develop outyear fuels program estimates</p>	<p>Regional Offices/National Forests</p>	<p>5/1 each year</p>
<p>Forest Service and DOI bureaus will develop and maintain a list of fuels treatment cooperators/partners that have engaged in the project selection process in each state. List will be submitted to the DOI OWFC and FS Fire & Aviation Management</p>	<p>FS and and DOI Fuel Treatment Coordinators with support from Regional/State Fuels Coordinators</p>	<p>5/15 each year</p>
<p>DOI bureaus will indicate approximate number of acres of fuels to be treated in the budget out-year (current FY +2 years) for use in developing departmental budget guidance and budget justifications (e.g. 5/30/02 provide # acres to be treated FY04).</p>	<p>Bureau Directors/DOI Fuel Treatment Coordinators submit to OWFC</p>	<p>5/30 each year</p>

Process Steps	Responsibility	Timeframe (Due Date)
Forest Service and DOI Bureau field units and Tribes, in collaboration with local level partners, create a list of new single-year and new or continuing multi-year fuel treatment projects. The list of projects represents potential treatments for the next fiscal year based on the President's Budget, has been prioritized locally, and will be submitted to Regional/State offices. Priority considerations for local project development and prioritization will be based on the Federal Cohesive Strategy and local issues (refer to priority criteria in Federal Cohesive Strategy).	Local Level cooperators	7/1/current year
Forest Service and DOI Regional/State Offices, in consultation with States, Tribes, and local partners, prioritize projects, consolidate lists, and submit consolidated package for their area of responsibility to national offices. Priority considerations for project development and prioritization will be based on the Federal Cohesive Strategy (refer to priority criteria in Federal Cohesive Strategy).	Regional/State Offices, cooperators	8/1/current year
DOI Bureau Directors submit proposed new project list to Department of the Interior; Forest Service National Office compiles project list for next fiscal year. This proposed project list serves as the initial DOI and Forest Service input to Budget Year Action and Financial Plan.	National Offices – Bureau Directors, Forest Service Chief	9/1/current year
DOI National Offices utilize Federal Cohesive Strategy priorities for distributing wildland-urban interface and hazardous fuel treatment funds and establish Bureau regional/state budget caps, dependent upon budget approval and/or Department direction for implementation. Priority considerations for project development and prioritization will be based on the Federal Cohesive Strategy (refer to priority criteria in Federal Cohesive Strategy).	Bureau Directors, National Offices – Fuel Treatment Coordinators	Completed after budget approved.
DOI Bureaus make preliminary budget allocations to the Regions and States.	National Office – Bureau Directors	9/8 current year based on Congressional action to date. Subject to change upon final Congressional appropriations.
DOI Bureau Regional/State offices make fund allocation decisions for new fiscal year projects within their defined budget caps.	Regional/State Offices	9/15/current fiscal year based on Congressional action to date. Subject to change upon final Congressional appropriations.

Process Steps	Responsibility	Timeframe (Due Date)
Forest Service and DOI Bureaus issue official budget allocations to Regions and States.	National Offices – Bureau Directors, Forest Service Chief	For DOI Bureaus - upon apportionment of appropriation by the OMB. FS and DOI budget offices will give budget policy guidance upon completion of Congressional appropriation. Forest Service – Hazardous fuels budget allocations are transmitted as part of total FS budget program direction.
DOI administrative units/local groups get assigned new project lists (Funded Project List).	Local Level cooperators	Upon apportionment of appropriation by OMB.
Initiate priority project implementation.	Local level cooperators	10/1 new fiscal year
FS administrative units adjust planned program in NFPIInfo to reflect budget allocation.	National Forests	30 days after notification from National Office
National offices compile final Funded Project List (provide as final input to current fiscal year Action and Financial Plans).	National Office – Bureau Directors, Fuel Treatment Coordinators	Upon apportionment of appropriation by OMB. Transmitted 30 days after final budget.
DOI Bureaus develop complete list of carryover projects that could not be implemented from previous fiscal year.	Local level cooperators, Regional/State Offices, National Offices – Bureau Directors, Fuel Treatment Coordinators	10/15
Forest Service and DOI compile previous fiscal year accomplishments (input to End of Year Report).	Regional/State Offices, National Offices	11/1 current year
If DOI projects cannot be implemented, the local level with cooperators will recommend a substitute project or carrying the existing project until a later date. If funds need to be shifted (within units, between units, between regions, or between bureaus), the Regional/State Offices will be notified and decisions will be made by Bureau Directors at the National level. If FS projects can not be implemented, changes will made at field level, and database adjusted.	Input and communication from all levels. Decisions regarding fund re-distribution or movement made by Bureau Directors FS local level	Ongoing
DOI local administrative units, Tribes, and other cooperators track project status and report to Regional/State Offices on status monthly.	Local Level cooperators	Ongoing –monthly reports
DOI Regional/State offices monitor accomplishment milestones and support increased implementation when needed, identify need for fund transfers when needed, and keep national offices informed of projects status.	Regional/State Offices	Ongoing – monthly
FS units ensure that data in NFPIInfo is current.	National Forests	Ongoing - monthly