



January 22, 2014

The Honorable Sally Jewell
 Secretary of the Department of the Interior
 U.S. Department of the Interior
 1849 C Street, NW
 Washington, DC 20240-0001

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
 Secretary of Agriculture
 U.S. Department of Agriculture
 1400 Independence Avenue, SW
 Washington, DC 20250-3700

Dear Secretary Jewell and Secretary Vilsack:

On behalf of the National Association of State Foresters I would like to thank you for your continued support of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (“Cohesive Strategy”). The National Association of State Foresters supports the final phase, Phase III, of the development of the Cohesive Strategy. As we move into implementation it is important to note that this national, multiyear interagency collaborative effort is different from previous efforts. It is national in scope, includes all lands, is grounded in a science-based risk analysis, and was built with an emphasis on the field level perspective. This is reflected in the vision statement and three major goals of the Cohesive Strategy:

Vision statement: “To safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a community, learn to live with wildland fire.”

The three major goals of the Cohesive Strategy:

- (1) Restore and Maintain Landscapes: Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.

Executive Director
 Jay Farrell

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- (2) Fire-adapted Communities: Human populations and infrastructure can withstand wildfire without loss of life and property.
- (3) Wildfire Response: All jurisdictions participate in reaching and implementing safe, effective, efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.

The Cohesive Strategy establishes a framework for wildland fire management stakeholders and others interested in working together to share information and inform decision making at all scales: national, regional, state, and local.

In the coming months we will complete the Cohesive Strategy Report, and a National Action Plan. To realize the vision of the Cohesive Strategy and to achieve the three principal goals, we must continue internal and external engagement. Fundamentally, implementation means incorporating the principles and concepts of the Cohesive Strategy into our normal business activities. Implementation is not over and above our regular wildland fire program activities; rather implementation should be about how we integrate those activities.

The National Association of State Foresters embraces the 11 Guiding Principles of the Cohesive Strategy and encourages the utilization of them for ongoing interagency communication and collaboration that will be necessary for implementation of strategy:

- Reducing risk to firefighters and the public is the first priority in every fire management activity.
- Sound risk management is the foundation for all management activities.
- Actively manage the land to make it more resilient to disturbance, in accordance with management objectives.
- Improve and sustain both community and individual responsibilities to prepare for, respond to, and recover from wildfire through capacity-building activities.
- Rigorous wildfire prevention programs are supported across all jurisdictions.
- Wildland fire, as an essential ecological process and natural change agent, may be incorporated into the planning process and wildfire response.
- Fire management decisions are based on the best available science, knowledge, experience and risk assessment tools and processes, used to evaluate risk versus gain.
- Local, state, tribal and federal agencies support one another with wildfire response, including engagement in collaborative planning and the decision-making processes that take into account all lands and recognize the interdependence and statutory responsibilities among jurisdictions.
- Where land and resource management objectives differ, prudent and safe actions must be taken through collaborative fire planning and suppression response to keep unwanted wildfires from spreading to adjacent jurisdictions.
- Safe aggressive initial attack is often the best suppression strategy to keep unwanted wildfires small and costs down.
- Fire management programs and activities are economically viable and commensurate with values to be protected, land and resource management objectives, and social and environmental quality considerations.

Thank you again for your support of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy. The National Association of State Foresters looks forward to continuing to work with our federal, state, tribal, local, and non-profit partners to complete and implement the Cohesive Strategy. Additional information on the Cohesive Strategy is available at www.forestsandrangelands.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "John C. Maisch". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "John" being the most prominent.

John "Chris" Maisch
Alaska State Forester
NASF President