

ADDRESSES: Comments should be directed to:

Federal Wildland Fire Policy and Program Review, Department of the Interior, 18th and C Streets NW., Mail Stop 7355, Washington, DC 20240, or sent via FAX to (202) 208-5078.

National Interagency Fire Center, 3833 South Development Avenue, Boise, ID 83705.

See FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT: for telephone requests for additional copies of the draft report.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:

Tim Hartzell, Bureau of Land Management, (202) 208-5472, or Dave Morton, USDA-Forest Service, (208) 387-5633. Additional copies of the draft report may be obtained by calling Pat Moore, BLM's National Office of Fire and Aviation, (208) 387-5150, or Janelle Smith, National Interagency Fire Center, (208) 387-5457.

SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION: On December 30, 1994, following one of the worst wildland fire seasons since the early 1900's, the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior chartered an interagency Steering Group to conduct a review of Federal wildland fire policy and programs. Composed of representatives of the Forest Service, USDA, and the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and National Biological Service, USDI, the Steering Group was directed to assess four specific themes: the role of fire in resource management; use of prescribed fire to reduce unhealthy fuel build up; preparedness and suppression; and the wildland/urban interface. The Steering Group has prepared a draft report addressing these issues as well as interagency coordinated policy and program management. The full text of the draft report is printed at the end of this notice, except for the Glossary (Appendix I) and References (Appendix II). While the draft report reinforces public and firefighter safety as the foundation for wildland fire management, it also breaks with the past on crucial points:

- The draft report would recognize fire's natural role in maintaining healthy ecosystems.
- The draft report would recommend an increased use of fire as one of many resource management tools to reduce fuel build up and to improve forest health.
- Existing plans to use fire for resource benefits stop at abstract administrative borders; the draft report would promote a mosaic of fire regimes along natural ecosystems.

- The draft report would clarify and emphasize the agency administrator's accountability for fire management.

- Current policy encourages interagency cooperation; the draft report would require that suppression, prescribed burning, planning, and research be conducted on an interagency basis across agency jurisdictions.

- Where wildlands and developed communities interface, federal fire protection practices are not consistent. The draft report would clarify federal roles in wildland fire protection as cooperating partners through agreements with responsible tribal, State, or local jurisdictions.

Public comment on the draft report is requested and will be considered by the Steering Group in developing a final report and recommendations for transmittal to and consideration by the two Secretaries.

For the Department for the Department of Agriculture.

Dated: June 13, 1995.

David G. Unger,
Associate Chief.

For the Department of the Interior.

Dated: June 14, 1995.

Sylvia V. Baca,
Acting Assistant Secretary.

Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review; Draft Report

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Executive Summary

The Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture, together with Tribes, States, and other jurisdictions, are responsible for the suppression and use of wildland fire in the management and protection of natural resources. Although these organizations have traditionally cooperated in carrying out their fire management responsibilities, it is more important than ever, as resources become increasingly scarce, to explore ways in which cooperation can be improved and made more effective.

Because fire respects no boundaries, uniform Federal policies and programs must lead to more productive cooperation and efficient operations.

The Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and Program Review was chartered by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to examine the need for modification of and addition to Federal fire policy. The review recommends a set of consistent policies for all Federal wildland fire management agencies. The resulting analysis/report is organized around five major fire management program components: (1) Coordinated Policy and Program Management, (2) Role of Fire in Resource Management, (3) Use of Prescribed Fire and Fuels Management, (4) Preparedness and Suppression, and (5) Wildland/Urban Interface Protection.

Two very fundamental principles are recognized as being basic to all other findings and recommendations in this report: (1) Safety is paramount; and (2) wildland fire is a natural occurrence that plays a fundamental role in natural resource management. We must recognize that wildfire has historically been a major force in the evolution of our wildlands, and it must be allowed to continue to play its natural role wherever possible.

The report recommends thirteen new or revised fire management policies consistent across all Federal wildland firefighting agencies. The first policy recommendation says that public and firefighter safety is the first priority. Other policies deal with integrating fire considerations into resource planning, the use of prescribed fire, capability to suppress fires, economic efficiency, protection priority, interagency actions, consistent standards, and the Federal role in the wildland/urban interface.

A set of fire management principles have been identified that address interagency collaboration in the fire management business. We recommend adoption of these principles by the Federal resource agencies. They include guidance on safety, planning, standardization, coordination, use of science, risk management, and economic efficiency.

The report recommends that some very critical processes continue to explore what role States, local governments, and insurance companies should take in addressing the growing fire problems in the wildland/urban interface. We will recommend that the Secretaries require all agencies to develop an implementation plan describing the actions and time frame required to implement the recommendations of this report.