

FEDERAL WILDLAND FIRE POLICIES—Continued

	Current Department of the Interior ¹	Current Forest Service ²	Proposed Federal
Economic Efficiency.	Bureaus will ensure that all fire management activities are planned and based upon sound considerations, including economic concerns. Bureaus will coordinate and cooperate with each other and with other protection agencies for greater efficiency and effectiveness. Wildfire damage will be held to the minimum possible, giving full consideration to minimizing expenditure of public funds for effective suppression.	Provide a cost-efficient level of wildfire protection on National Forest lands commensurate with the threat to life and property and commensurate with the potential for resource and environmental damage based on hazard, risk values, and management objectives.	Fire management and fire program activities will be based on economic efficiencies developed by using sound economic analysis methodologies that incorporate commodity, non-commodity, and social values.

¹ From current Department of the Interior Manual.

² From current USDA-Forest Service Manual.

Coordinated Policy and Program Management

Situation

In analyzing fire policy and programs, several broad components of fire management were identified as needing improvement. These issues are grouped in this section to show the need for consistency across all aspects of fire management. They include accountability, measurement of program efficiency, organization, fire management data, weather support, and legal review and policy analysis of programs, authorities, responsibilities, and liabilities.

The five Federal wildland fire management agencies have worked together for many years to improve many aspects of the fire management program. However, in order to accomplish a more unified approach to fire management, provide the maximum opportunity for reinvention of processes, and improve results, they must take this approach even further.

Program Accountability

Current mechanisms to ensure management accountability in the fire program are ineffective. Policy and guidance are unclear about agency administrators' and fire program managers' responsibilities, and their position descriptions and performance standards are vague in that regard. As a result, there is little incentive for managers to adhere to established policy and direction or to provide oversight to the program. In addition, this lack of performance criteria does not portray expectations to inexperienced administrators or fire program managers.

Most employees and many fire managers don't believe that fire accomplishments or failures, especially in suppression activities, can be measured. There is a widely held view

that line officers are not held accountable for failures or rewarded for accomplishments. This aggravates the perception that line officers can give fire activities a low priority without being held responsible for the consequences. Furthermore, there is a perception by employees that only political or public pressure affects the line officer's dealings with fire.

This perception of a lack of accountability is increased by managers not speaking out in support of the fire program, not motivating employees to become certified and be available for fire suppression duties, limiting forces available for regional or national mobilization, or de-emphasizing fire priorities. This perception is also exacerbated by line officers' broad interpretations and varying levels of implementation of policies requiring support of fire suppression activities.

Goal

Achieve an appropriate recognition of fire management program requirements and successfully fulfill managerial and technical responsibilities.

Actions

Federal agencies will:

- Develop and utilize consistent fire management qualification standards and specific selection criteria for fire program managers.
- Establish job performance standards for agency administrators and fire managers that clearly reflect the complexity and scope of the fire management responsibilities.
- Provide consistent and adequate training for agency administrators commensurate with their role and responsibility in fire management.
- Ensure that agency administrators and fire program managers are held accountable for conducting the fire program in accordance with established

policies, procedures, standards, and direction.

- Ensure that employees who are trained and certified participate in the wildland fire program as the situation demands; noncertified employees with operational, administrative, or other skills support the wildland fire program as needed; and administrators are responsible, accountable, and make employees available.

Program Efficiency

Services provided by Federal agencies are being critically scrutinized, both internally and externally, to determine the relative priority of every program and its contribution to the agency mission and the public good. As part of that scrutiny, the returns on investments in the fire program must be compared with the returns in other programs. Subsequently, every activity within the fire management program must be analyzed according to its economic efficiency. For example, presuppression activities such as prevention and preparedness must be able to display their contribution to reduced suppression costs, and prescribed fire programs must show a return in improved or restored ecosystems or reduced suppression costs.

Agency managers must be able to analyze program economic efficiency in order to establish the priority and scope of the fire management program. Current information on fire program benefits and costs are neither reliable nor consistent, and present program analysis methodologies are inadequate and inconsistent among Federal agencies. One dilemma is the question of what values should be included in such an analysis of diverse Federal wildlands; however, commodity, non-commodity, and social values all must be considered.

A growing concern shared by Members of Congress, agency