



JUN 04 2015



Memorandum

To: Chief, U.S. Forest Service
Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, National Park Service
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs

From: Sally Jewell
Secretary of the Interior

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture

Subject: 2015 Direction to Wildland Fire Leadership

In 2014, we were fortunate that the number of wildfires reported, acres burned, and structures lost all remained below the national 10-year average. The success of last fire season was a result of the outstanding work of our firefighters, pilots, and incident teams, along with our cooperators. Every year we see more and more examples of where our fuels reduction and forest restoration efforts are reducing the threat to communities and creating safer and more successful opportunities for suppression. Even with that progress, we anticipate the 2015 wildfire season to be another challenging year to manage fire. As in the past, wildfire risk in 2015 will be highly dependent upon both weather and human factors. The drought potential remains elevated in some areas of the West and extreme in California, which will have an impact on wildfire risk this year especially in areas with heavy fuels. Understanding how the drought will impact fire behavior allows us to fully evaluate risks with a broad perspective for both planned and unplanned ignitions, while considering the people we serve and landscapes we protect. In accordance with the goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, we seek to create resilient landscapes and fire-adapted communities, and provide safe, efficient wildfire response.

Our implementation of Federal wildland fire policy follows direction set forth in the Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, 2009. The protection of firefighters and public safety is the single, overriding priority in every fire management activity. Setting priorities among protecting public communities and community infrastructure, other property and improvements, and natural and cultural resources will be done based on the values to be protected, human health and safety, and the costs of protection. These overarching priorities direct our collective fire management activities.

Department of the Interior Secretarial Order 3336 establishes protecting, conserving, and restoring the health of the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem as a critical fire management priority.

We expect that Agency administrators and fire managers will integrate this additional priority into the allocation of fire management resources and assets, particularly in priority habitat in Fire and Invasive Assessment Team identified areas; and, will ensure fire management activities are consistent with the 2009 guidance and its overarching priorities, most importantly, to protect firefighter and public safety.

These priorities form the basis for firefighting resource and asset prioritization and allocation decisions by the national Multi-Agency Coordinating Group, the various Geographic Multi-Agency Coordinating Groups, local coordinating groups, and each manager of U.S. Forest Service and Interior units. We recognize that additional firefighting resources and assets may be required to meet these priorities.

We ask you to communicate and emphasize these priorities to your managers, fire staffs, and all employees, and to remember the basic tenets of wildland fire management:

- Be prepared with a well-trained, qualified workforce and a clear, up-to-date plan for responding to wildfires;
- Acknowledge risks and actively mitigate them in order to minimize their effect;
- Stress cooperation and communication between agencies, bureaus, states, tribes, partners, and interested publics; and
- Actively participate in incident briefings and utilize a review/lessons learned process to improve and praise actions.

We expect agency administrators and fire managers in all of your agencies to adhere to the following guidance:

- Firefighter and public safety is a core value that governs every decision and activity.
- Understand and embrace the guiding principles set forth in the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.
- Understand your roles and responsibilities and ensure your staffs understand and implement their responsibilities.
- Be engaged; reach out to your interagency partners and stakeholders to ensure they are also appropriately involved.
- Collaborate to set realistic expectations and develop practical, risk-informed decisions and approaches.
- Learn from others and share what you learn.
- Involve your chain of command at the earliest opportunity.
- Keep the public informed.

Our success will be defined by how well we meet our obligations and how efficiently we use our resources and the management tools available to us. By keeping our employees and the public safe from harm or loss, effectively suppressing unwanted fire, and doing everything we can to improve the health of our landscapes, we will be successful.

Thank you for your leadership, engagement, continued commitment, and service to preparing for and protecting our Nation against the unwanted impacts of wildfire while managing for the health of our landscapes.