

An Introduction to the National Fire Plan

History, Structure, and Relevance to Communities

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Prepared by:
Pinchot Institute for Conservation
1616 P Street, NW Suite 100
Washington, D.C. 20036
(202) 797-6580
www.pinchot.org

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How to use these materials: *A note to workshop presenters*

The enclosed workshop materials are intended to familiarize you with the history, structure, and programs of the National Fire Plan. They are written from the perspective of communities that wish to be active in fire prevention, suppression, and post-fire restoration activities as well as take advantage of the economic opportunities associated with this vast government effort.

Because community workshops devoted to the National Fire Plan will take form in all shapes and sizes, we leave the presentation of the material up to your discretion. The workshop is divided into sections so that you can decide what portions of the materials are most relevant to your audience. Here are some suggestions of how to present what we have compiled:

- Read through the material and **select portions that are relevant to your workshop**. Present important points through mini-lectures with time in between for participant discussion. In many cases, sample discussion questions have been suggested. Provide workshop attendees with photocopies of the materials so that they are not pressured to take as many notes.
- Provide photocopies of the material to attendees before the workshop. Have individuals or groups present on different sections while you facilitate discussion.
- Photocopy the appendices on overheads and use them to summarize the key points of the lessons. Use these to illicit discussion and turn to the full materials when you need more information or clarification of specifics.
- All materials can be made available in Microsoft Power Point format. If you would like portions of the workshop reproduced in that format, please contact us, giving us at least two weeks notice before your workshop to create the slides.
- Where possible, collect and present *place-specific information* about the programs and policies discussed in these materials to make the workshop more locally relevant.

We would be happy answer any questions about the workshop materials, provide further recommendations, or put you in touch people who have already used this module in their workshops. We are also always open to feedback of any kind concerning these materials. Please contact either of us at the phone numbers and e-mail addresses below.

Thanks and good luck,

Peter Kostishack
(202) 797-6582
peterk@pinchot.org

Naureen Rana
(202) 797-6584
nrana@pinchot.org

1. A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

1.A A Legacy of Forest Fire Management

The wildfire season of the summer of 2000 was a wake-up call to government and communities throughout the nation. The extensive damage inflicted upon forests and property made it clear that the risks associated with catastrophic forest fires are tremendous due to a combination of factors, including:

- A legacy of past forest management and societal values that emphasized fire suppression.
- A dramatic increase in population and infrastructure in the Rural West.
- A lack of coordination between federal, state, and local government agencies, responsible for the prevention and suppression of catastrophic wildfires.

While some debate exists as to whether the destruction caused in recent fire seasons is much worse than in the past, it is clear that the costs of fighting fires are greater than ever before and that the increase of settlement in fire-prone ecosystems has augmented the destructive potential of forest fire. Additionally, certain ecological conditions created by the forest management paradigms of the last century are thought to have led to ecological systems that are especially susceptible to large catastrophic fires.

Fire is an integral and natural part of many of our nation's ecosystems. While many fires are caused by human activity, most forest fires are

started by lightning strikes in dry storms. Forests have been subject to the natural disturbance of wildfire for over 350 million years. Such natural forces have helped shape and maintain many different forests and environments throughout the world, offering a multitude of benefits. For example, fire has the ability to reduce flammable leaf litter (thereby reducing the risks and negative impacts that often accompany large-scale catastrophic wildfires). It is also a critical element in seed bed preparation for several tree species (stimulating germination of seedlings and providing crucial available nutrients). Fire also has the ability to control unwanted competitive vegetation and improve habitat conditions for wildlife.

It is also important to note that within any fire event there is heterogeneity (patches of intense burning and patches of milder impact). This variation results from many factors including fuel loading, moisture content, and changing slope and wind. Whereas benefits can be derived from some fire events, in cases of catastrophic wildland fire, the impacts can be both severe and long lasting. These impacts include changed soil surface temperatures, which can have severe consequences for germinating seeds and young seedlings. Other consequences of severe fires can be a reduction in the ability of soil to capture nutrients and changes in the hydrologic processes of the ecosystem.

Humans have long influenced the occurrence of fire in the ecosystem. There is ample evidence that Native Americans used fire as a forest and range management tool long before European settlement. History also reveals that forest fires were a considerable threat to rural settlers during the 1800's, especially on degraded forests that had been poorly managed for timber.

When the USDA Forest Service was formed in 1905, one of its goals was to prevent fires in our National Forests. The agency's mascot, Smokey Bear, has campaigned for the prevention of human caused forest fires, but the resulting simplistic perception that all fires negatively impact the forest turned out to be a detrimental one. The Forest Service, which set goals to not let fires grow beyond 10 acres and to put all fires out by 10:00 in the morning before the conditions developed for them to spread, began to deny forests the regenerative properties of fire.

This fire suppression also led to the accumulation of woody debris and other small biomass in the understory of the forest. These materials, collectively known as ladder fuels, give what would ordinarily be low, ground fires, the opportunity to climb up into the forest canopy and develop into crown-engulfing flames that are dangerous, if not impossible, to put out. Additionally, in many managed forests, the overstocking of new seedlings and a failure to carry out subsequent timber stand improvement practices have exacerbated the problem of ladder fuels in forests. The government estimates that 211 million acres of federal lands are at risk to catastrophic wildfire due to hazardous fuel conditions created by a legacy of fire suppression.

Because of our legacy of forest management and fire suppression, preventing catastrophic forest

fire in fire-prone ecosystems now necessitates restoring a natural fire regime. In general, this involves the controlled use of fire at frequencies that are higher than permitted during the past century, but at low intensities. Unfortunately, the condition of many forests, not to mention the greater presence of communities and development along the margins of forests, often make controlled burns too risky to set. In these areas, prescribed burning may require some amount of prior mechanical vegetation treatment or thinning to remove much of the existing ladder fuel. Such hazardous fuels reduction plays a large role in the federal government's efforts to reduce the risk of catastrophic fire.

The risk to life and property posed by catastrophic wildfire and the corresponding cost of fighting fires have increased due to enormous population growth and development in areas that are close to undeveloped forestland. These areas, often referred to as the wildland-urban interface, are rapidly expanding in the West. Not only does a greater presence of human activity increase the likelihood of wildfire ignition, it also increases the risk of fire to communities and infrastructure, necessitating more immediate and extensive suppression activities.

The risk of catastrophic fire and the potential for fires to spread are exacerbated by traditional organizational structures governing fire management. In landscapes of mixed land ownership, fire management has typically been implemented in a piecemeal fashion, with activities planned on an agency-by-agency and unit-by-unit basis. Inadequate coordination between landowners can reduce the effectiveness of treatments and place neighbors at risk.

Optional Discussion Points

1. As a group, develop lists of benefits and dangers of wildfire in fire-dependent communities.
 2. What changes in fire management policy have you noticed in your community over the years?
 3. How is your community changing in terms of population and settlement patterns? Do these changes affect the risk of destructive wildfire?
-

1.B The Wildfire Season of 2000

The wildfire season of 2000 was one of the worst years of catastrophic wildfire in memory. The destruction started early in the season when, in May, a prescribed fire at the Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico escaped into the town of Los Alamos, destroying 235 homes and threatening the U.S. Department of Energy's nuclear weapons lab. In the Bitterroot Valley of Montana, wildfires impacted 356,000 acres of state, private, and federal lands, the majority of them in the Bitterroot National Forest. By the time fall rains and snow brought the fire season to an end, fires had burned more than seven million acres of public and private lands and 850 structures throughout the country, costing the government an estimated \$1.3 billion in suppression.

The fires had an enormous economic impact resulting from the direct cost of the destruction caused by the fires and losses due to severe declines in local economic activities such as tourism and forest-based industries. There were also many significant ecological impacts, including the loss of vegetation, hillside erosion, siltation of streams, changes in species composition, and greater risk of invasive species colonizing the landscape.

Several factors were blamed for the severity of fires during the 2000 fire season:

- **Weather.** The influence of the 1998 La Niña, which affected weather patterns throughout the western United States, led to significantly low precipitation throughout the fall and winter of 1999. An early spring, with limited rains, led to the accumulation of dry grasses and shrubs by early summer, accompanied by intensifying drought conditions. In July, a series of dry lightning storms over the Northern Rockies provided ample opportunities for ignition and high winds. Only in September did sufficient rain, and snowfall at high elevations, begin to decrease the extent and severity of many fires.
- **Vegetation Conditions.** Because of severe drought conditions, the moisture levels in vegetation dropped. Live vegetation dried up and the moisture content in dead fuels dropped throughout the spring and summer.
- **Insufficient Fire Fighting Resources.** The frequency of ignitions due to lightning and humans kept fire fighters on their toes throughout the 2000 fire season. Dry fuels and high winds ensured rapidly spreading and intense fires, posing a great danger to fire fighters. In addition, the number of fires close to homes and other structures required especially costly suppression and prevention measures to avoid losing property. By August, uncontrolled large fires were prevalent throughout the West, quickly exhausting the nation's firefighting resources. By the second week in August, every firefighting team in the country was committed, leaving few resources to attend to new fires. More than 29,000 individuals were involved in the firefighting efforts, including about 2,500 Army soldiers and Marines and fire crews from Canada, Australia, Mexico, and New Zealand. In

addition, 1,200 fire engines, 240 helicopters, and 50 air tankers were put to use during that season. Unfortunately, difficult conditions and scarce resources necessitated making hard decisions to prioritize fire management.

Optional Discussion Points

1. How have severe fire seasons affected your community economically and socially?
 2. How have severe fire seasons affected the forest and rangeland ecosystems in your community?
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1.C The Origins of the National Fire Plan

In response to the severity of the wildfires of 2000 and the great cost to the nation of protecting forests and human communities, President Clinton asked Secretary of Agriculture Dan Glickman and Secretary of the Interior Bruce Babbitt to write a report outlining how the nation can better respond to wildfire risks and emergencies. The resulting report, entitled, “Managing the Impact of Wildfires on the Communities and the Environment,” was released September 8, 2000¹. This report, and a set of corresponding agency strategies, formed the basis of what is now known as the National Fire Plan. The plan outlines how the country will develop an integrated response to severe wildfires to ensure sufficient firefighting resources for the future, restore ecosystems damaged by fires, rebuild communities and economies, and reduce the risk of future fire through the treatment of hazardous fuels. ***The key points and corresponding budget of the National Fire Plan are outlined in Section 2.***

¹ A copy of the report is available on the web at <http://www.fireplan.gov/president.cfm>.

The report was incorporated into the Administration’s 2001 budget request to Congress, which ultimately secured nearly \$2.9 billion in appropriations for the USDA Forest Service and the Department of Interior for implementation. Besides appropriating funds, Congress also provided direction and authority to federal agencies for the implementation of the National Fire Plan. Of note in this direction was the inclusion of Title IV in the 2001 appropriations bill (later Title II of the corresponding 2002 bill) that emphasized using funds for wildland fire emergency management and forest restoration efforts in the wildland–urban interface. The bill specifically gave the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management authority to enter into procurement contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements with local non-profits, Youth Conservation Corps, or small disadvantaged businesses in order to carry out hazardous fuels reduction activities on federal lands and provide training and monitoring associated with those activities.

10-Year Comprehensive Strategy

A key tenet of the National Fire Plan is coordination between government agencies at the federal, state, and local levels to develop strategies and carry out programs. Building from this basis for cooperation, in the FY 2001 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, Congress directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to work with state Governors and other stakeholders on developing the *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy – A Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment*. Involved in its creation were a geographically diverse group of people representing different levels of government, tribal interests, conservation and forest products groups, and community-based restoration organizations.

The 10-Year Strategy, which was completed on August 13, 2001 and endorsed by the Western Governors' Association, the National Association of Counties, and the National Association of State Foresters, generally supports the goals of the National Fire Plan. Central to its development were the following objectives:

- Reduce risk to communities and the environment from wildland fires for the long-term.
- Promote a collaborative, community-based approach to address wildland fire issues that recognizes the importance of making key decisions at the local level.
- Support the primary goals of the National Fire Plan: improve prevention and suppression, reduce hazardous fuels, restore fire-adapted ecosystems, and promote community assistance.
- Hold the core guiding principles of collaboration, priority setting, and accountability.

By May 1, 2002, an implementation plan for the strategy will be developed by the federal agencies, the Governors, and others to establish operational relationships between the federal and state agencies and tribal entities and to establish the specific financial, legal, and technical requirements for its implementation.

Optional Discussion Points

1. What changes can your community make during the next ten years that would help restore a fire-adapted ecosystem and reduce the risk of fire?
2. Do you agree with the primary objectives outlined in the 10-Year Strategy? What are the priorities for your community?

2. THE KEY POINTS AND FUNDING LEVELS FOR THE NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

Key Points of the National Fire Plan

The National Fire Plan directs funding and attention to the following issues:

- Firefighting
- Rehabilitation and Restoration
- Hazardous Fuels Reduction
- Community Assistance
- Accountability

The USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of Interior (DOI) land management agencies (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service) have the primary responsibility of coordinating the implementation of activities that fall under these categories.

2.A Firefighting

In response to the National Fire Plan, efforts are being made to:

- Improve the prevention and suppression of wildfires;
- Improve fire planning and program analysis;
- Reduce suppression costs; and
- Support related research projects.

Prevention and Suppression

Both the USFS and the DOI agencies have increased their firefighting resources, including personnel, equipment, and aircraft. These

resources are shared and coordinated to provide a more effective and efficient response to wildland fire regardless of jurisdiction. Specifically related to personnel, the agencies have added training courses, modified current classes, and, in some cases, raised the qualifications for positions related to firefighting.

Fire Planning and Program Analysis

In cooperation with State Foresters, the USFS and DOI agencies have completed a strategic assessment of planning and budgeting capabilities (and desired improvements) entitled, “Developing an Interagency Landscape Scale Fire Planning Analysis and Budget Tool.” This model addresses fuels management, fire use, fire protection, and fire education and prevention.

Suppression Cost Controls

To the extent possible, the agencies are taking actions to reduce fire suppression costs. This commitment includes a long-term effort to reduce the amount of fuel available to burn, and, as a result, increase the ability to suppress unwanted wildland fires. Also, outside contractors are conducting an independent review of the relationship between the agencies’ current suppression practices and the associated costs – hoping that such a process will reveal opportunities to save money and coordinate activities.

Related Research Efforts

Approximately \$10 million has been directed toward the exploration of new technologies and the development of support systems for fire operations. This investment will help firefighters make critical safety decisions. Funds are being dedicated to building research and development capacity in:

- Initial attack and suppression allocation modeling;
- Risk assessment monitoring of fire behavior and smoke dispersion;
- Meteorological prediction systems;
- Fire severity forecasting; and
- Smoke and fire behavior modeling.

The Joint Fire Sciences Program (JFSP), which has been in existence since 1998, is also assisting preparedness efforts by improving the abilities of local land managers and citizens to make site-specific decisions about fire protection. The JFSP is managed by a board of five representatives from the USFS and five from the DOI - including one each from the Bureau of Land Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, National Park Service and the U.S. Geological Survey. Its efforts are focused on developing science-based, interagency approaches to fuels inventory and mapping, evaluation and scheduling of fuels treatments, and monitoring of treatment effects and effectiveness. Through the JFSP, National Fire Plan funds are being used to:

- Assess fire behavior during and immediately after fire events; and
- Evaluate aircraft-based tools for monitoring fire behavior.

2.B Rehabilitation and Restoration

Post-fire rehabilitation and restoration activities authorized under the National Fire Plan are aimed at reviving lands that are unlikely to recover naturally from fire damage. As such, they often require extensive planning, consultation, and design and make take several years to fully implement. Responsibility for the implementation of individual projects lies at the field level, and projects covering multiple jurisdictions are being planned and implemented on an interagency basis. Rehabilitation and restoration activities supported by the National Fire Plan include:

- Reforestation;
- Watershed restoration;
- Road and trail rehabilitation;
- Fence replacement;
- Fish and wildlife habitat restoration;
- Invasive-plant treatments;
- Replanting; and
- Reseeding.

General priorities among these activities include: preventing the introduction of invasive species; promoting restoration of ecosystem structure and composition; rehabilitating threatened and endangered species habitat; and improving water quality.

Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation

The National Fire Plan's rehabilitation and restoration objectives build on the activities of several already existing programs. The DOI's Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Program and the USFS Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Program support the repair of landscapes burned by severe wildfires. Under these programs, land and other natural resources are treated *immediately* post-fire to prevent

further degradation, and related rehabilitation efforts help improve the overall health of forest ecosystems damaged by wildfire. The National Fire Plan enhances these existing programs by providing additional funding for short-term (up to one year), emergency activities.

Long-term Restoration

The National Fire Plan also intends to support *long-term* efforts to improve lands impaired by wildfire. To achieve this goal, the Plan can fund the monitoring and evaluation of restoration treatment effectiveness for up to three years following the fire. It can also help cover the cost of repairing or replacing minor facilities damaged by fire. Through these contributions, it is hoped that the National Fire Plan will play a significant role in restoring the biological systems and human communities that have been adversely affected by wildfire.

Related Research Efforts

Research is currently being conducted by all involved agencies to improve restoration and rehabilitation treatments. Current research includes studies in native plant materials that are more site-specific and able to compete with non-native invasive species. Also, an interagency native plant coordination team was formed to develop a long-term program to supply and manage native plant materials for restoration and rehabilitation.

2.C Hazardous Fuels Reduction

Hazardous Fuels Treatment

The USFS and DOI agencies’ hazardous fuels treatment programs aim to reduce the impacts of wildfires on communities and to restore fire-

adapted ecosystems to healthy conditions. Hazardous fuels treatments are activities such as prescribed burning and mechanical thinning, which remove excessive amounts of highly flammable natural vegetation from the forest. DOI’s programs have been funded since 1998, but the Forest Service has a history of fuels reduction that goes back to the early 1980s. The Forest Service formally shifted away from its “suppression only” approach and toward a more comprehensive ecosystem management strategy in response to the adoption of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy in 1995.

Under the National Fire Plan, the agencies’ hazardous fuels treatment programs have expanded significantly in terms of budgets and acres treated. With these improvements has come a commitment to meeting the following objectives:

- Increase the level of treatment in the wildland-urban interface in close cooperation with stakeholders;
- Reduce fire risk in ecosystems where it is excessively high, while preventing low risk areas from deteriorating; and
- Increase the use of private sector services to reduce hazardous fuels through contracts and procurement.

Hazardous Fuels Treatment
Under the National Fire Plan (all agencies)

| | FY2001 | FY2002 (planned) | FY2003 (planned) |
|---|-----------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Total acres treated | 2,284,983 | 2,470,766 | 2,870,757 |
| Acres treated in the Wildland-Urban Interface | 774,242 | 771,302 | 1,191,886 |
| Other | 1,510,741 | 1,699,464 | 1,678,871 |

Utilization of Harvested Biomass

Both the USFS and DOI agencies are interested in finding economic uses for the wood harvested through hazardous fuels treatments. Hazardous fuel is largely comprised of dead, diseased and down trees, as well as small diameter trees, that could be used to power biomass-to-energy facilities or could be converted into wood products. Developing outlets for these resources could provide economic opportunities for rural, forest-dependent communities, while reducing the risks posed by catastrophic wildfires.

Forest Health Management

Efforts undertaken by the Forest Service's Cooperative Lands Forest Health Management Program also contribute to hazardous fuels reduction. Under this program, federal land managers work with State Foresters to provide surveys, monitoring, and technical and suppression assistance to landowners to address forest health needs. By coordinating their efforts, these forest managers hope to maximize program dollars and ensure that forestlands under all ownerships are healthy. The technical assistance that this program provides focuses heavily on the management and control of native and non-native forest insects and diseases, and the evaluation of forest and tree health after fires.

Related Research Efforts

Through the Joint Fire Science Program, or JFSP (described under "Firefighting"), efforts are being made to increase the understanding of the impacts and effectiveness of land management treatments including prescribed fire and thinning. Evaluations of these activities assess cost-effectiveness, social impacts, air quality and watershed impacts, and ecological

consequences. The JFSP also supports fuels inventory and mapping to help land managers:

- identify the location of hazardous fuels;
- determine where fuels have accumulated beyond the historic range of variability; and
- determine potential impacts of current fuel conditions on fire regimes and ecosystem processes.

The program also supports the development of treatment schedules and helps to coordinate these schedules among agencies.

2.D Community Assistance

Community involvement is a critical element in restoring damaged landscapes and reducing fire hazards near homes and communities. The community assistance programs supported by the National Fire Plan focus on building state and community capacity to develop and implement citizen-driven solutions that lessen local vulnerability to risks associated with wildland fires. Most of these programs preceded the National Fire Plan but are receiving additional funding from it.

Types of Assistance Available

Below are brief descriptions of the community assistance programs that are supported by the National Fire Plan [These programs are discussed in greater detail in Section 5.]

- **Rural Fire Assistance.** DOI funding is being used to provide technical assistance, training, supplies, equipment, and public education support to rural fire departments.
- **State Fire Assistance.** USFS funding provides technical and financial assistance to states to enhance firefighting capacity at state and local levels. This funding also supports fire hazard mitigation projects in the wildland-urban interface and facilitates

an expanded series of FIREWISE workshops.

- **Volunteer Fire Assistance.** USFS funding provides assistance, through states, to volunteer fire departments to improve communication capabilities, increase wildland fire management training, and purchase protective fire clothing and firefighting equipment.
- **Economic Action Programs.** USFS funding supports programs that help local communities to identify, develop, and expand economic opportunities related to traditionally underutilized wood products and to expand the utilization of wood removed through hazardous fuel reduction treatments.
- **Community and Private Land Assistance.** Beginning in 2001, USFS funding has been used to support a suite of programs aimed at restoring damaged landscapes and rebuilding communities. Activities funded under this area reinforce the role of local ideas and solutions in planning for reduced wildland fire risk, and identifying economic opportunities arising from fuel reduction and ecosystem restoration projects.

2.E Accountability

The establishment and maintenance of a high level of accountability is essential to the effectiveness of the National Fire Plan.

Regarding this point, the federal government claims to have mechanisms in place to conduct oversight reviews, track progress, monitor performance, and provide overall accountability for program completion.

The report prepared for the President after the catastrophic fire season of 2000 called for the establishment of a Cabinet-level National Fire

Plan team, to be chaired by the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture and the Interior. Although this team has not been formed, the Departments are following up on the tasks it was expected the team would oversee. These include: ensuring that appropriate performance objectives are established and met; ensuring that adequate financial and other resources are made available; establishing a system for identifying and addressing implementation issues promptly; and ensuring that the environmental reviews are undertaken and completed on a timely basis. In periodic reports to Congress, the Departments comment on the progress made in implementing these tasks.

Some of the critical next steps that the Departments hope to report progress on at the close of FY2002 include:

- The development of interagency performance measures;
- Completion of an implementation plan for the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy;
- Increased coordination between the U.S. Department of the Interior, USDA Forest Service, and other Federal agencies;
- A stronger role for states and non-governmental organizations in implementing the National Fire Plan and contributing to related planning efforts.

2.F National Fire Plan Appropriations

Like many other federal initiatives, the National Fire Plan is subject to the annual appropriations process to determine its funding levels for each Fiscal Year (FY). In the proposed budget for FY 2003, the Bush Administration continues to stress the importance of collaborative wildland fire management. The budget request was submitted to Congress on February 4, 2002 and

outlines funding priorities for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2002. The National Fire Plan is one piece of this request. Generally speaking, the National Fire Plan budget breaks down into the following categories:

- Preparedness (USFS and DOI)
- Operations (USFS and DOI)
- Volunteer Fire Assistance (USFS)/ Rural Fire Assistance (DOI)
- State Fire Assistance (USFS)
- Economic Action Program (USFS)
- Emergency Contingency (USFS and DOI)

The total 2003 budget request of \$2.11 billion for the National Fire Plan represents a seven percent decrease from 2002's \$2.27 billion, and budget cuts are not equal across all of the Plan's focus areas or between the Forest Service and the Department of Interior agencies.

Proposed Budget for FY 2003

The chart on the following page (*National Fire Plan Appropriations for FYs 2001-2003*) indicates that the proposed National Fire Plan budget for FY 2003 will not fund Fire Facilities, Economic Action Programs, or Emergency Contingency. Respective activities supported by these line items include: the maintenance and construction of airtanker and other firefighting facilities; training, information dissemination, and financial assistance for local communities; *emergency* fire suppression, stabilization; and rehabilitation; facilities, research and development; and state fire assistance.

The proposed elimination of discrete funding for the **Economic Action Programs** (which fall under the Forest Service's State and Private Forestry deputy area) has concerned many community forestry practitioners who consider its cost-share grants an important benefit to rural communities and businesses. In a February

2002 Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources hearing, USDA Undersecretary of Natural Resources Mark Rey suggested that this point in the President's budget proposal represents a readjustment in appropriations as the Forest Service attempts to integrate community assistance into its over all mission, no longer compartmentalizing it in State and Private Forestry.

Also of note in the proposed FY 2003 budget are the increases in funding for certain activities. The largest percentage increase is for Fire Suppression, with an increase of 57% over FY 2002 appropriations. In addition, funding levels will increase for Hazardous Fuels Reduction (up 6.5%) and Rehabilitation (up 4.1%). Slight funding increases are also proposed for Forest Health Management and, for the Forest Service, Preparedness.

Optional Discussion Points

1. What parts of the National Fire Plan are most critical to your community needs?
2. Exercise: Have participants rank the parts of the National Fire Plan that are most important to them and compare that ranking to the federal government's appropriations.

National Fire Plan Appropriations for FYs 2001-2003* (amounts shown are in \$1,000s)

| | USDA 01 | USDA 02 | USDA 03 | DOI 01 | DOI 02 | DOI 03 | TOTAL 01 | TOTAL 02 | TOTAL 03 | % increase or decrease (FY2002-2003) |
|--|------------------|------------------|------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|
| PREPAREDNESS | 611,143 | 622,618 | 626,528 | 314,712 | 280,807 | 277,213 | 925,855 | 903,425 | 903,741 | + 0.03% |
| Fire Suppression | 319,324 | 255,321 | 443,361 | 153,109 | 127,424 | 160,351 | 472,433 | 382,745 | 603,712 | + 57.7% |
| Fire Facilities | 43,903 | 10,376 | 0 | | | | 43,903 | 10,376 | 0 | - 100% |
| Hazardous Fuel | 205,158 | 209,010 | 234,673 | 194,971 | 186,190 | 186,190 | 400,129 | 395,200 | 420,863 | + 6.5% |
| Research and Development | 15,965 | 22,265 | 21,761 | | | | 15,965 | 22,265 | 21,761 | - 2.3% |
| Rehabilitation and Restoration | 141,688 | 3,668 | 4,644 | 104,769 | 20,000 | 20,000 | 246,457 | 23,668 | 24,644 | + 4.1% |
| Fire Plain Easement | 0 | 0 | 19,947 | | | | 0 | 0 | 19,947 | + |
| Joint Fire Sciences | 0 | 8,000 | 8,000 | | | | 0 | 8,000 | 8,000 | --- |
| Forest Health Management | 11,974 | 11,974 | 12,107 | | | | 11,974 | 11,974 | 12,107 | + 1.1% |
| Community & Private Land Fire Assistance | 34,923 | 0 | 0 | | | | 34,923 | 0 | 0 | --- |
| VOLUNTEER FIRE ASSISTANCE (FS)/ RURAL FIRE ASSISTANCE (DOI) | 13,251 | 13,315 | 13,286 | 9,978 | 10,000 | 10,000 | 23,229 | 23,315 | 23,286 | - 0.12% |
| STATE FIRE ASSISTANCE | 77,828 | 75,693 | 72,101 | | | | 77,828 | 75,693 | 72,101 | - 4.98% |
| ECONOMIC ACTION PROGRAM | 12,472 | 12,472 | 0 | | | | 12,472 | 12,472 | 0 | - 100% |
| EMERGENCY CONTINGENCY | 425,063 | 346,000 | 0 | 199,560 | 54,000 | 0 | 624,623 | 400,000 | 0 | - 100% |
| TOTAL | 1,912,692 | 1,590,712 | 1,456,408 | 977,099 | 678,421 | 653,754 | 2,889,791 | 2,269,133 | 2,110,162 | - 7.5% |

*The appropriations for FY 2003 are proposed, not actual.

3. COORDINATION OF THE NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

The National Fire Plan is a long-term, comprehensive initiative led by:

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture Forest Service (USFS); and
- The land management agencies of the Department of the Interior (DOI):
 - Bureau of Indian Affairs
 - Bureau of Land Management
 - Fish and Wildlife Service
 - National Park Service.

The federal government is working in cooperation with states, tribes, and other concerned stakeholder groups to ensure the effective implementation of the National Fire Plan on the ground.

This collective effort builds upon the existing infrastructure of fire management policies and programs to enhance and better coordinate efforts, within the government and beyond, that are aimed at reducing the risks and negative impacts associated with catastrophic wildfires.

3.A The Role of the Federal Government

Historically, the various federal land management agencies have tackled fire management from a number of different angles, including: firefighting, providing related assistance to states and communities, managing fuel loads, and conducting research.

See Appendix 4 for an organizational diagram depicting the coordination of federal government agencies in the National Fire Plan.

Existing Fire Management Protocol

The federal government has made a concerted effort to coordinate its collective reaction to forest fires and to facilitate the consequent delivery of services to manage them. The **National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC)**, located in Boise, Idaho, serves as “the nation’s support center for wildland firefighting” by pooling the fire and aviation resources of all relevant federal agencies and fostering cooperative agreements with state, local, and rural entities.

Through NIFC, federal agencies share firefighting supplies, equipment, and personnel to facilitate efficient and cost-effective firefighting or disaster management. NIFC also facilitates the immediate response (at local, regional, and national levels) and the allocation of resources for fighting severe wildfires. Seven federal agencies participate in NIFC: the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the Bureau of Land Management, the Forest Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, the National Park Service, the National Weather Service, and the Office of Aircraft Services. The National Association of State Foresters is also a part of NIFC, ensuring that the States have a direct role in determining firefighting priorities.

Representatives from each of the NIFC-member organizations comprise the **National Wildfire Coordinating Group** (NWCG). The NWCG coordinates government wildfire management standards and related programs in the hopes of avoiding a duplication of various agencies' efforts and encouraging active collaboration. Among other things, this group provides a formalized system for determining common training, equipment, and other standards to ensure that all federal, state, and local agencies can most easily work together.

Existing Post-Fire Emergency Assistance

The Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Small Business Administration (SBA) are also involved in the federal government's response to forest fires. Through loan and grant programs, these agencies can provide a portion of the financial resources necessary to assist individuals and communities in rebuilding their homes, businesses, and neighborhoods after catastrophic fire events.

- For more information on FEMA, visit www.fema.gov.
- For more information on the SBA, visit www.sba.gov.

Coordination Efforts Initiated by the National Fire Plan

In January 2001, under the directives of the National Fire Plan, the Secretary of the Interior established the **Office of Wildland Fire Coordinator** to coordinate and integrate the fire management programs of the Department's four land management agencies as well as the related activities of two other Interior agencies – the U.S. Geological Survey and the Bureau of Reclamation.

That same month, the Secretary of Agriculture designated a Forest Service **National Fire Plan Implementation Team** headed by a National Fire Plan Coordinator. *See Appendix 7 for a list of the Forest Service's National Fire Plan Points of Contact.*

Then, in September 2001, the Department of Interior's Office of Wildland Fire Coordinator organized a **Wildland Fire Steering Group** consisting of representatives from Interior's four land management agencies. A representative from the Forest Service's National Fire Plan Implementation Team serves as an advisory member. The group is charged with "provid[ing] leadership and oversight for the fuels management program."

In response to recent criticisms from the National Academy of Public Administrators that the National Fire Plan lacks centralized coordination and leadership, the USFS and DOI agencies are contemplating the creation of an **Interagency Wildland Fire Leadership Council**. The Forest Service has approved the charter for this council, and DOI is currently reviewing it. If created, this council would provide *active* interagency leadership for the implementation of the National Fire Plan and help integrate consistent wildland fire management policies into the relevant land management agencies.

3.B The Role of the States

While the agencies mentioned above are directed to implement the National Fire Plan on federal lands, the most comprehensive approach to achieving this goal on *all* endangered lands relies on the involvement of non-federal entities such as state and local governments, the private sector, and community members.

National Association of State Foresters

Both the USFS and the DOI agencies recognize the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) as their largest non-federal firefighting partner – making coordination with this organization especially significant for implementing the National Fire Plan. NASF is a non-profit organization that represents the directors of the state forestry agencies from all fifty states, eight U.S. territories, and the District of Columbia. The State Foresters provide management assistance and protection services for over two-thirds of the nation's forests.

- For more information on NASF, visit www.stateforesters.org.

The Western Governors' Association

In September 2000, the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior acted on a Congressional mandate to engage a range of stakeholders in the development of a National 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy. In part, this mandate was directed at making the states full partners in the planning, decision making, and implementation of the National Fire Plan. Working with the Western Governors' Association, the Secretaries assembled a diverse team for this task that was composed of both public officials and private interest groups. Although the National Fire Plan applies to all fire-affected areas of the country, the Western states, led by their governors, have been particularly involved in shaping it because of the prevalence and severity of forest and grassland fires in their region.

In August 2001, the Secretaries endorsed the *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment*. The team is now developing an

implementation plan, scheduled for release in May 2002, to provide consistent and standard direction to the process of carrying out the common goals articulated in the 10-Year Strategy.

- To review the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, visit http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/fire/final_fire_rpt.pdf.

3.C Other Stakeholders

The importance of the participation of non-federal government stakeholders in the National Fire Plan cannot be overlooked. Typically, the primary burden for wildland-urban interface fire protection falls to property owners, as well as state, tribal, and local governments, as they provide the front line of defense for the majority of the forest fires that occur in this interface across the country. Through various community assistance programs (see Section 5), the National Fire Plan hopes to provide greater levels of support to these entities. As evidenced by the multi-stakeholder team that was pulled together to work on the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy, the federal government is actively seeking the input of communities and other interest groups in the process of shaping and implementing the National Fire Plan.

Optional Discussion Points

1. Do you feel that the National Fire Plan is effectively reaching your community? How are policies dictated in Washington, D.C. being carried out in the field?
2. What entities in your area are involved in shaping and implementing the National Fire Plan?

3. How has the National Fire Plan influence the delivery of fire management services in your community?
4. Who can you contact regarding concerns and/or questions related to the National Fire Plan?

4. WORKFORCE AND CONTRACTING OPPORTUNITIES IN THE NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

The National Fire Plan has the potential to provide considerable economic opportunities for forest-dependent communities and industries. Among these are employment opportunities are those with federal agencies for firefighting and restoration work and those in the private sector through procurement contracts for hazardous fuels reduction and fire adapted ecosystem restoration. In Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002, about \$400 million of National Fire Plan funding has been appropriated for hazardous fuels reduction. An additional \$12.5 million during each of those years has been earmarked to support communities and small business through the USDA Forest Service's Economic Action Programs (described in more detail in Section 5).

4.A Government Employment Opportunities Under the National Fire Plan

Throughout its implementation, the National Fire Plan is expected to create more than 3,000 new permanent positions in government agencies. Additional personnel have been hired on a seasonal or temporary basis to complete fuel treatment and restoration activities. These activities are also being accomplished through contracts with private sector businesses, non-profits, and the Youth Conservation Corps. Public and private employment combined, the government estimates that approximately 8,000

jobs will be created through the implementation of the National Fire Plan. Information about government employment opportunities with the National Fire Plan can be found at the following websites:

- **Federal Jobs**
www.usajobs.opm.gov
- **Forest Service Employment**
www.fs.fed.us/people/employ
- **Forest Service Fire Employment**
<http://www.fs.fed.us/fire/jobs.shtml>
- **Department of Interior Fire Employment**
www.doi.gov/fire/
- **National Park Service Employment**
<http://www.nps.gov/fire/jobs/index.htm>
- **Student Conservation Association's Fire Education Corps** (Volunteer and Internship Opportunities for Students)
<http://www.sca-inc.org/fire/index.html>

4.B Contracting Opportunities in Hazardous Fuels Reduction

Hazardous fuels reduction projects are a major source of employment under the National Fire Plan. The Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations bills for FY2001 and FY2002 outline specific authorities that direct the use of funding for these activities. They instruct the Departments of Interior and Agriculture to use procurement contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements to carry out hazardous fuels reduction projects as well as training and

monitoring associated with those projects. These resources are available for hazardous fuel reduction projects on federal and adjacent non-federal lands.

The legislative language regarding hazardous fuels reduction contracting as it appears in Title II, Wildland Fire Management, of the 2002 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act (P.L. 107-63) reads as follows:

(1) In expending the funds provided with respect to this Act for hazardous fuels reduction, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture may conduct fuel reduction treatments on Federal lands using all contracting and hiring authorities available to the Secretaries applicable to hazardous fuel reduction activities under the wildland fire management accounts. Notwithstanding Federal government procurement and contracting laws, the Secretaries may conduct fuel reduction treatments on Federal lands using grants and cooperative agreements. Notwithstanding Federal government procurement and contracting laws, in order to provide employment and training opportunities to people in rural communities, the Secretaries may award contracts, including contracts for monitoring activities, to--

- (A) local private, nonprofit, or cooperative entities;
- (B) Youth Conservation Corps crews or related partnerships, with State, local and non-profit youth groups;
- (C) small or micro-businesses; or
- (D) other entities that will hire or train a significant percentage of local people to complete such contracts. The authorities described above relating to contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements are available until all funds provided in this title for hazardous fuels reduction activities in the urban wildland interface are obligated.

4.C Best Value Contracting

Procurement contracts are an important tool the government can use to carry out its hazardous fuels reduction work. Best value contracting is a standard contracting mechanism that allows government agencies to evaluate other factors, in addition to the price of a bid, when making a decision on the award of a contract. Factors considered in evaluating a contract often include the contractor's past performance, quality, delivery, and experience. Through consideration of a variety of factors, the government is able to award a contract to a more qualified bidder at a higher price if the overall value to the government is greater. In the process of evaluating bids, the agency may hold discussions with the bidders to help determine the quality of the proposed work.

The Appropriations Bills of Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002 authorized the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management to give special consideration to enhancing local and small business employment opportunities in issuing procurement contracts, grants or cooperative agreements for hazardous fuels reduction. The agencies are also encouraged to form such agreements with local non-profits, youth groups, such as the Youth Conservation Corps, or small disadvantaged businesses. It is intended to provide the agencies with the flexibility to provide employment and training opportunities to people in rural communities.

All procurement opportunities offered by the federal government under the National Fire Plan that exceed \$25,000 in value can be found on the Federal Business Opportunities website: www.Fedbizopps.gov

Vendors may register on that site to receive notices about procurement opportunities from selected organizations.

Optional Discussion Points

1. Discuss your local forest workforce. What businesses, skills, and equipment exist? What capacity is most needed.
2. What are the training needs of forest workers in your community?
3. Have community members had experience with best value contracting? What has that experience been like?
4. Have local businesses bid on National Fire Plan contracts? To what degree have they been successful in obtaining those contracts?

5. OPPORTUNITIES FOR COMMUNITIES IN FIRE DEPENDENT ECOSYSTEMS

5.A Designating Communities at Risk from Wildfire

Defining and Addressing the Wildland-Urban Interface

Over the past century, America’s population has nearly tripled. Much of the country’s new growth has occurred in the wildlands. Cities have expanded into suburbs and suburbs have blended into areas that were once considered rural. These changing demographic conditions have created a complex landscape, often termed the “wildland-urban interface.” These interface zones are particularly vulnerable to the risks associated with large-scale wildfires because they represent the intersection between combustible homes and structures and accumulations of woody wildfire fuels. As communities continue to sprawl into the wildlands, the threats to life and property – and the costs for fire suppression and protection – are expanding at astounding rates.

The federal land management agencies identify three types of wildland-urban interface communities:

1. Interface communities – structures directly abut wildland fuels.
2. Intermix communities – structures are scattered throughout a wildland area
3. Occluded communities – an island of wildland fuel, such as a park, is amidst a matrix of structures.

The National Fire Plan recognizes the potential severe impacts of forest fires in each of these wildland-urban interface areas and focuses its activities accordingly. Hazardous fuels reduction activities, support to state and rural fire departments, economic action programs, fire prevention activities such as the FIREWISE program, and the development of value-added wood utilization and related economic opportunities are components of the National Fire Plan that address the particular needs of such communities. Nonetheless, the concept of the wildland-urban interface can vary from community to community and needs to be discussed by community stakeholders to determine how fire management should be carried out to best meet diverse needs and values.

Listing of Communities at Risk in the Federal Register

In its guidance to the federal land management agencies in the 2001 Interior Appropriations Bill, Congress required the Forest Service and the Department of Interior to develop a list of all wildland-urban interface communities within the vicinity of federal lands that were at risk from wildfire. The agencies in turn asked the States and Tribes to provide them with lists of these communities, defining the wildland-urban interface as those communities, “where humans and their development meet or intermix with wildland fuel.”

The resulting list was published in the *Federal Register* on January 4, 2001 and contained 4,395 communities. Criticisms soon emerged about its lack of consistency, clarification, and prioritization. As a result, in May, 2001, a new list was published in the *Federal Register* in which the states were asked to rank and prioritize communities using criteria for calculating risk that included fire potential, social, cultural, and economic resources, and fire fighting capability. The resulting list contained more than 22,000 communities. An updated list, trimmed down to 11,376 communities, was published in the *Federal Register* in August of 2001.

Despite their efforts, the agencies charged with creating the list received widespread criticism for its inconsistency. The United States General Accounting Office has labeled the criteria used to identify and prioritize communities as varying across states and has criticized the Forest Service and the Department of Interior for not establishing well-defined criteria to identify wildland-urban interface communities within the vicinity of federal lands. The Forest Service has responded to this criticism, explaining that the adopted strategy allowed States and Tribes to determine their own needs and risks depending on settlement patterns, topography, and fire behavior. As a result, States and Tribes have used different criteria to identify their communities at risk. For example, California considered communities within 1.5 miles of federal lands to be at high risk while Idaho considered communities within 20 miles of federal lands.

See Appendix 5 for further Questions and Answers on the designation of Wildland-Urban Interface Communities.

Optional Discussion Questions

1. How do you define the wildland-urban interface in your community or region? What areas do you include as examples in your definition?
2. What factors should the government use to prioritize communities at risk? What factors place your community at risk for destructive wildfire?
3. In light of the criticism over the generation of the community lists in the *Federal Register*, what would be a better **process** for identifying and prioritizing communities at risk?

5.B Community Assistance Programs of the National Fire Plan

The National Fire Plan includes a suite of programs intended to help local communities better implement fire planning and protection strategies and strengthen local and state capabilities to support federal fire management efforts. Broadly, these programs fall into the following categories:

- **Rural Fire Assistance** (Department of the Interior)
- **State Fire Assistance** (USDA Forest Service in cooperation with State Foresters)
- **Volunteer Fire Assistance** (USDA Forest Service in cooperation with State Foresters)
- **Economic Action Programs** (USDA Forest Service)
- **Community and Private Land Assistance**

See Appendix 6 for Questions and Answers about the Community Assistance Programs of the National Fire Plan.

Rural Fire Assistance (Department of the Interior)

Through the Rural Fire Assistance program, the Department of the Interior provides technical assistance, training, supplies, equipment, and public education support to rural fire departments. The DOI has received \$10 million each year for FY 2001 and FY 2002 for this program. The funds are targeted to rural and volunteer fire departments that routinely help fight fires on DOI lands. This includes lands administered by the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the National Park Service (NPS).

Rural fire departments are eligible to receive funding if they:

- Have a statewide agreement with the state forester or maintain a cooperative fire agreement with a DOI agency (BLM, BIA, FWS or NPS);
- Serve a community with a population of 10,000 or less;
- Will be using the funding for training, equipment, and prevention activities;
- Have the capability to meet cost share at a minimum of 10 percent (this may include in-kind services); and
- Serve a community in the wildland-urban interface.

Rural fire departments meeting all of these criteria should contact a fire manager or contracting staff at their local DOI office to learn where to send application materials as well as deadlines for applying for funding².

² **Workshop Instructors:** Come prepared to your workshop with contact information for local agency representatives.

Applicants must then complete an application package that is available on the Internet at: <http://www.fireplan.gov/step3.cfm>.

State Fire Assistance (USDA Forest Service)

The Forest Service's State and Private Forestry Deputy Area and the National Association of State Foresters implement two Cooperative Fire Protection programs: State Fire Assistance and Volunteer Fire Assistance. State Fire Assistance provides funding for technical and financial assistance to the states in order to enhance firefighting capacity at the state and local levels. State Fire Assistance funding also supports fuels reduction projects in the wildland urban interface and helps expand a series of FIREWISE workshops, designed to help communities across the country implement practices that reduce fire risk. Also, through State Fire Assistance, the Forest Service supports a national public service fire prevention program.

The key elements of the program are:

- **Preparedness.** Increasing the ability of local, rural, and state organizations to provide coordinated fire protection and mobilization for fire suppression.
- **Hazard Mitigation.** Supporting state-led hazard mitigation activities in the wildland urban interface, emphasizing reducing property loss, decreasing fuels, and increasing public awareness in rural communities. For FY 2002, hazard mitigation projects will be funded through a competitive process. They will fall into three categories:
 - Hazardous fuels reduction,

- Information and education programs targeting mitigation and prevention, and
- Hazard mitigation for homeowners and their communities.
- **Fire Prevention.** Delivering a national fire prevention program through public service, advertising, educational activities, product licensing, and corporate partnerships.

For FY 2002, the Forest Service has been appropriated more than \$81 million in National Fire Plan funding for the State Fire Assistance program. States are expected to reach over 3,000 communities with this program in 2002.

To learn more about State Fire Assistance programs in your state, contact your State Forester or Forestry Department. An on-line directory of State Foresters is available through the National Association of State Foresters at <http://www.stateforesters.org/SFlist.html>.

FIREWISE Program

Since 1986, the federal fire management agencies and the National Fire Protection Association have been educating communities about fire safe planning through the FIREWISE program. This program helps people reduce their fire hazards and risks for themselves, their properties, and nearby natural resources. The National Fire Plan dedicated \$5 million (FYs 2001-2003) for development and delivery of FIREWISE, which is actually a suite of complementary programs aimed at informing the range of community stakeholders – homeowners, firefighters, builders, landscapers, insurance agents, and public officials – about the concept of FIREWISE living. Program components include the following:

- **FIREWISE Website:** www.firewise.org.

- **Communication Tools:** Publications and videos on landscaping, fire-safe building, firefighter safety, and other topics are available online and through other outlets.
- **Workshops, Training Sessions and Demonstration Events:** These activities are focused on reducing fire risk to property and lives through better community design and retrofit and preparedness planning.
- **Technical Assistance to Communities:** Through the FEMA Assistance to Firefighters Grant Program, fire departments around the country were eligible to receive Geographic Information System (GIS) software and hardware to help in their fire planning efforts.
- **Firewise Communities USA Recognition Program:** Communities can earn national status for their work to improve planning for and mitigation of fire hazards. Currently, there are 11 geographically diverse pilot communities in the recognition program, which will be officially unveiled in late 2003. Nationwide, there are thousands of communities with wildland-urban interface areas.

The **FIREWISE Communities Workshop Series** is an important component of this program. FIREWISE Communities Workshops are designed to share knowledge about how to handle fire risk in the wildland-urban interface zone. Launched in the Fall of 1999, these workshops have engaged over 30 stakeholder groups – federal agencies, national organizations, and private companies (as sponsors) – and the FIREWISE program is planning to offer more than two dozen national workshops across the country in 2003. Invited to each are the people who can influence the way an area is planned, built, maintained and protected.

Volunteer Fire Assistance (USDA Forest Service)

A second Cooperative Fire Protection program offered by the Forest Service through the State Foresters, Volunteer Fire Assistance provides technical and financial assistance to volunteer fire departments. Through this program, assistance is available to improve communication capabilities, increase wildland fire management training, and purchase equipment and protective clothing. The program operates through grants given to communities with populations under 10,000.

In FY 2001, \$13,251,000 of program funds were used for training, equipping first responders, and assisting fire departments in high risk communities in the wildland urban interface.

For FY 2002, \$13,315,000 of the National Fire Plan appropriations is directed to Volunteer Fire Assistance. Funding will be prioritized for the communities facing the greatest risk of wildland fire. Approximately 6,500 communities are expected to benefit. Despite this number, the program is able to meet less than 10% of all requests for assistance from volunteer fire departments.

Economic Action Programs (USDA Forest Service)

National Fire Plan funding for Economic Action Programs enables the Forest Service to work with local communities on fire planning, identify and develop economic opportunities related to underutilized wood products, and expand utilization of products removed from the forest through hazardous fuel reduction projects. The funding is used for information sharing, demonstrations, application development, and training for communities.

Projects proposed for Economic Action Program funding are developed with the help of the Forest Service Rural Development Coordinators. Projects are funded on a cost-share basis with the local participating organization. The federal government can contribute up to 80% of the cost of implementing a project, taking into account the fair market value of equipment, services, personnel, and other costs required to complete the work.

In FY 2001, the Economic Action Programs administered \$12,472,000 of National Fire Plan funding, focusing primarily on technical and financial assistance in developing markets for underutilized wood products. This was done through two project components:

- **Technology Implementation and State Capability Enhancement:** The Forest Service's Forest Products Lab coordinated efforts to support utilization and marketing through technology assistance in multi-region projects, states, and more than 1,000 communities.
- **Financial Assistance:** Grants have supported hundreds of local projects that emphasize market development and expansion and increasing the market value of by-products of hazardous fuels reduction treatments. Examples of such projects include biomass-to-energy co-generation applications; uses for compost, pulp, landscaping, and animal bedding; wood in bridges and other transportation structures; and round timber construction technology.

The National Fire Plan funding for the Economic Action Programs remains the same for FY 2002 but it has been left out of the President's proposed budget for FY2003. The program is administered regionally, and a list of Economic Action Program representatives for

each of the Forest Service's Regions can be found at on the Internet at:

http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/eap_coord's or in *Appendix 7*.

Community and Private Land Assistance (USDA Forest Service)

In FY 2001, Congress appropriated almost \$35 million for Community and Private Land Assistance under the National Fire Plan. Because this funding represented emergency assistance to communities affected by the fires of 2000, it was not offered again in FY 2002. Nonetheless, this assistance is worth noting as a key component of the National Fire Plan's overall strategy for helping communities. The purpose of Community and Private Land Assistance projects was to replace infrastructure damaged by fire, particularly fences, and to support high priority hazard mitigation projects implemented by the states in areas of high fire risk. In 2001, funds were allocated under the following four projects areas:

- **Hazard Mitigation:** \$5,987,000 in cooperative grants were awarded for hazard mitigation and risk-reduction projects in cooperation with the state. The projects include activities such as fuels reduction and management, planning, prevention education, and community mitigation projects.
- **Fence Replacement:** \$8,980,000 in funding was provided to replace facilities on farms and ranches, particularly fences, destroyed in the fires of 2000. Requests for assistance totaled nearly \$17 million across 15 states.
- **Economic Action Pilot Projects:** \$7,982,000 was distributed in a competitive grants program that supported diversified uses of forest resources by funding pilot or demonstration projects that expand existing

markets or develop new markets for wood products resulting from fuels removal.

- **Multi-Resources Stewardship Planning:** \$6,985,000 was directed toward technical assistance to communities and non-industrial private forest and range owners to help plan natural resource activities that reduce the risk of wildfire.

Optional Discussion Points

1. Which elements of the National Fire Plan's community capacity building are most critical for your community and why?
2. What are the most critical needs of your community with respect to the National Fire Plan? (e.g. protection, restoration, jobs, business infrastructure.)

5.C Community-Based Monitoring of the National Fire Plan

An important way to get involved with the work of the National Fire Plan is to participate in monitoring the effects of its implementation on ecological and social systems. While the large amount of funding initially committed to the National Fire Plan can have very positive impacts on safety, employment, economic recovery, and forest health, it may also be used in ways that are detrimental or ineffective for communities. To help bring about positive outcomes, communities must ask questions about how the National Fire Plan is affecting them and find effective ways to communicate their findings to the responsible decision makers. There are many ways in which the National Fire Plan can be evaluated. Below are some examples of questions that can be addressed:

Project Location and Implementation

- Where are hazardous fuels projects located?
- Are they being carried out in the highest risk areas?
- How has risk been measured?
- How is the work being carried out on the ground?
- Does the work significantly reduce the risk of wildfire?
- What are the environmental impacts to water, soil, vegetation, and wildlife?
- Is the government doing its duty of tracking and reporting projects?

Employment and Economic Opportunities

- Who is doing the work / who was awarded the contracts?
- Are contracts awarded on a best-value basis and what criteria are used?
- Is there capacity in the local area to do fire management work?
- Has job training been offered in conjunction with the National Fire Plan?
- Is the workforce learning technical aspects of fire management ranging from surveys to monitoring to rehabilitation?
- Is local business capitalizing on the products of fuels reduction?
- Is there capacity to use these products in value-added manufacturing?
- Are there sufficient markets for value-added products?

Partnerships and Coordination

- Have federal and state agencies formed partnerships with local government and organizations?
- Are efforts for fire management coordinated across different jurisdictional boundaries?

- Are neighboring landowners involved in the planning of work on public lands?
- Are fire plan projects integrated with other ecosystem management work planned on public lands?

Some Examples of Community-Based Monitoring

There are a few independent projects underway to encourage local or community-based monitoring of the implementation of the National Fire Plan. It is important that citizens, leaders, and local organizations, pay critical attention to the work that is being carried out and have avenues available to them to communicate their findings. Monitoring can be as simple as learning where hazardous fuels reduction projects are planned near your community and looking at how they are carried out. Or, monitoring can take a more advanced form in which set protocols are followed and consistent data are collected that can be compared with other communities and regions. All types of monitoring are valuable and the following examples of local monitoring efforts underway are provided to get your community thinking about how it can begin to evaluate how the National Fire Plan is being carried out on the ground.

Monitoring of Hazardous Fuels Reduction Projects in New Mexico – The Forest Trust

The Forest Trust, based in Santa Fe, NM, is a non-profit organization dedicated to promoting sustainable forestry. In order to help local communities keep tabs on where forest thinning projects are planned or occurring on federal lands, they have developed a system for retrieving the relevant information from federal

agencies and mapping projects so that they can be easily communicated to the public. While this may sound straightforward, those who have ever tried to get specific project information from the government know that it can often be complicated and, if successful, the information may not always be easy to interpret. The step-by-step system used by the Forest Trust covers all the bases of who to contact within the agencies and what questions should be asked to get the right information. The process of mapping the information can be low-tech, without the need for computers and geographic information systems (GIS).

Having accurate baseline information on where projects are located is a good first step for monitoring. With this information, the public can make its own assessment of whether or not the government is meeting its priorities of treating high-risk areas and concentrating its work in the wildland-urban interface. It is also important baseline information for those who would like to visit the sites and evaluate the quality and ecological impacts of the work performed.

For more information about this process for learning about and mapping National Fire Plan projects, please contact: Shirl Harrington, The Forest Trust, Santa Fe, NM; shirl@theforestrust.org; 505-983-8992 x 40.

A Framework for Community Monitoring of the National Fire Plan – The Watershed Research and Training Center, Sustainable Northwest, and the University of Oregon Ecosystem Workforce Program

In order to provide more in-depth analysis of the impacts of the National Fire Plan on the well-being of communities, a partnership of non-profits and academics, funded by the Ford

Foundation, is developing a framework for monitoring the social, ecological, and economic impact of its projects on communities. The monitoring looks at information about employment with agency fire crews, best value contracts issued under the National Fire Plan, what firms are getting the contracts, local benefits of material removed from hazardous fuels reduction, number of acres with fuel loads treated, and whether or not these acres met Best Management Practices for water and soil protection. A component is also being developed to assess the outcomes and impacts on communities of the Economic Action Program's fire-related grants.

The monitoring framework also involves local government and community groups in assessing how the National Fire Plan projects work for them. It is being tested in four forests in California through the FACA chartered Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management Klamath Province Advisory Committee. It will also be tested with some communities in central Oregon. If you would like more information on this monitoring program or would like to incorporate it into your community workshop, contact Lisa Wilson at the Watershed Research and Training Center, Hayfork, CA; lwilson@hayfork.net.

Multi-Party Monitoring of Forest Service Stewardship Pilot Projects – Pinchot Institute for Conservation (lead)

The Pinchot Institute for Conservation has been working with teams of stakeholders to develop a system for examining pilot stewardship projects on National Forests in a way that engages community based groups, local/regional/national interest groups, and public agencies. Although not specifically National Fire Plan projects, several of the proposed pilot stewardship

projects involve hazardous fuels reduction or post fire restoration activity. Projects are occurring around the country and are authorized to employ expanded contracting authorities, previously unavailable to the Forest Service. To ensure consistency in monitoring the diverse projects, a three-tiered structure has been established, built from the project level outward, that consists of local, regional, and national multi-party monitoring, evaluation, and assessment teams, each responsible for examining a standardized set of criteria. These criteria, which were determined collaboratively by the stakeholders, include biophysical, economic, social, and administrative variables. Together they can provide a comprehensive way to evaluate a project and consider its value from a variety of perspectives. Information about the monitoring of the stewardship pilot projects and the criteria used for project monitoring can be found on the website:

<http://www.pinchot.org/pic/cbf/mpme.html>.

5.D Community Involvement Through National Forums

There are several national forums for communities to become involved in shaping the policies and programs of the National Fire Plan. While much of the collaboration between agencies and communities is occurring on the ground, there are important opportunities to influence national policy by bringing community experiences to the knowledge of national decision-makers.

Forums for Sharing Stories about the National Fire Plan: *The Fire Chronicles* and *Fireplan.info*

One effort to raise awareness about the on-the-ground work of the National Fire Plan is through

sharing stories and experiences about its implementation around the country. The Forest Trust has found this anecdotal evidence useful in identifying trends and issues for communities that emerge as well as sharing approaches that have been successful in certain areas. In its monthly electronic newsletter, *The Fire Chronicles*, the Forest Trust showcases stories and information about the local articulation of the National Fire Plan and how its programs affect public forestlands and the ecological and human communities that they support. People with community-based perspectives on the National Fire Plan are invited to submit their stories. To receive the list electronically, contact Laura McCarthy, The Forest Trust, Santa Fe, NM; laura@theforestrust.org; 505-983-8992 x14.

A valuable source of third-party information about the National Fire Plan is being developed and will be available on the Internet at the site www.fireplan.info this summer. Another project initiated by The Forest Trust, this website will build upon the community stories in the *Fire Chronicles*, provide information to urban and rural practitioners concerned with implementation of the National Fire Plan, assist in national scale monitoring of the National Fire Plan, and offer a place for practitioners to share experiences with the National Fire Plan at the local level. It will also contain photos of project work occurring in the forest, share results of community-led monitoring efforts, and provide resources and links to relevant agencies and organizations involved with the National Fire Plan.

The Community Stewardship Collaborative:

Helping communities and agencies find avenues for collaboration

On January 18th and 19th, 2001, a workshop, entitled *Fire and Water: Developing Mechanisms for Community Stewardship of Natural Resources*, was held in Lakewood, Colorado to provide an opportunity for the USDA Forest Service and a number of community forestry practitioners and supporters to share perspectives, expectations, and desired outcomes of the agency's implementation of the National Fire Plan and the Forest Service's Large-Scale Watershed Restoration Projects. Both of these programs provide critical opportunities for communities, non-profits, and businesses to work with local, state, and federal agencies to develop viable strategies for restoring watersheds and fire dependent forest ecosystems.

Initiated at that meeting, the Community Stewardship Collaborative is an alliance of community forestry practitioners, non-profit organizations, government agencies, and foundations that are committed to finding ways for forest dependent communities to gain improved access to the information, resources, training, and employment opportunities associated with these ecosystem restoration programs. Among the goals of this Collaborative are to:

- Open new channels of communication between forest dependent communities and policy makers.
- Build partnerships between government, communities, businesses, and non-profits.
- Develop from within the capacity of federal agencies to work with communities on projects that improve the health of ecosystems and societies.

- Analyze the process and criteria for selecting the communities at risk for wildfire and the projects carried out to address that risk.
- Create a framework for local monitoring of the ecological, social, and economic impacts of these programs.
- Provide information and training about federal programs to forest-dependent communities through outreach and training workshops.
- Through research and dialogue, continually define the field of community forestry in the United States to make it more inclusive of diverse communities and stakeholders.
- Bring the perspectives of communities and practitioners to the discussion of how federal agencies can more efficiently address pressing issues of wildfire risk and ecosystem restoration.

Current participants in the CSC include the Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters, American Forests, Communities Committee of the Seventh American Forest Congress, the Ford Foundation, the Forest Trust, the National Forest Foundation, the National Network of Forest Practitioners, the Pinchot Institute, Society of American Foresters, Sustainable Northwest, the USDA Forest Service, the Watershed Research and Training Center, and Willamette Valley Reforestation.

The CSC puts out a monthly electronic newsletter called the Community Stewardship Communicator and is in the process of putting up a website at:
www.pinchot.org/pic/collaborate/CSC_Home

To receive more information about this Collaborative or to get involved, please contact Peter Kostishack or Naureen Rana at the Pinchot Institute: (202) 797-6580.

Appendices

- 1. Glossary of Terms**
- 2. Key Points of the National Fire Plan (Summary)**
- 3. National Fire Plan Appropriations by Program (Charts)**
- 4. Federal Level Coordination of the National Fire Plan (Organizational Diagram)**
- 5. Urban Wildland Interface Communities Within the Vicinity of Federal Lands That Are at High Risk From Wildfire (Questions and Answers)**
- 6. Community Assistance (Questions and Answers)**
- 7. Contacts and More Information**

Glossary of Terms

Best value contracting: A procedure authorized in the Federal Acquisition Regulations (FAR) System by which the government can award contracts based upon the expected outcome that the acquisition provides the “greatest overall benefit in response to the requirement.”

Biomass: Organic material. Also refers to the weight of organic material (e.g. roots, branches, needles, and leaves) within a given ecosystem.

Biomass energy facility: An energy generation plant that can produce energy from biomass through combustion, gasification, anaerobic digestion, or biofuel production.

Community and Private Land Fire

Assistance: A USDA Forest Service program during FY 2001 of the National Fire Plan that provided financial support for restoring fire damaged ecosystems and rebuilding damaged structures in communities.

Community Stewardship Collaborative: A coordinated network of non-profit organizations, community forestry practitioners, and government employees that are working to develop strategies for realizing the goals of collaborative stewardship in the implementation of the National Fire Plan and the Large-Scale Watershed Restoration Projects.

Economic Action Programs: A collection of programs administered by the USDA Forest Service’s Cooperative Forestry Staff that assist forest-dependent rural communities and business achieve goals of sustainable development. The EAP programs provide grants, which are offered regionally.

Emergency Contingency: Term applying to emergency National Fire Plan funding that was offered to the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior during Fiscal Years 2001 and 2002. Funding was primarily used for emergency fire suppression and to pay back previous years’ budget deficits.

Federal Register: A legal newspaper published every business day by the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) that contains federal agency regulations; proposed rules and notices; and executive orders, proclamations and other Presidential documents.

Fire adapted ecosystem: A natural system in which the physical environment, structure, processes, and biota have been shaped through the recurrence of fire.

Fire Plain Easement Program: A pilot program proposed in the President’s FY2003 budget request that would enable States to use grant funds to acquire perpetual easements to permit the implementation of fire suppression strategies on private lands within and adjacent to National Forest System Lands.

Fire Suppression: All work involved in extinguishing or confining a fire, beginning with its discovery. Fire suppression is a large component of the National Fire Plan accounting for more than \$300 million in expenses in 2001 and \$250 million in 2002.

FIREWISE: A national program sponsored by federal wildland fire agencies and the National Fire Protection Association, which is focused on educating communities about strategies to reduce fire risk to property and lives.
<http://www.firewise.org>

Fuel loading: The accumulation of natural, flammable material in an ecosystem, including vegetation, woody debris, leaves, grass, and logging slash.

Fuels treatments: Any measurable procedure to reduce the amount of hazardous fuel in an ecosystem.

Hazardous fuels reduction: Any strategy that reduces the amount of flammable material in a fire-prone ecosystem. Two common strategies are mechanical thinning and controlled burning. Hazardous fuels reduction is a significant element of the National Fire Plan, for which more than \$200 million was appropriated for each of the first two years.

Interface community: A category of community in the wildland urban interface characterized by structures that abut wildland areas.

Intermix community: A category of community in the wildland urban interface characterized by structures scattered throughout a wildland area.

Invasive species: A species that demonstrates rapid growth and spread, invades habitats, and displaces other species.

Joint Fire Sciences Program (JFSP): A partnership between six federal land management agencies that performs research on fuels inventory and mapping; scheduling of fuels treatments; and monitoring and evaluating fuels treatments.
http://www.nifc.gov/joint_fire_sci/index.html

Ladder fuels: Vegetation which may allow a fire to burn from ground level to lower tree

branches and can eventually lead to fires reaching the crowns of trees. Grass, brush, small trees, shrubs, low branches, bark, moss, and lichens can potentially be ladder fuels.

Mechanical fuels treatment: Any number procedures that use machines to reduce hazardous fuels in the ecosystem.

National Fire Plan: An interagency federal government report and corresponding programs that address the prevention and suppression of wildfire throughout the country. The National Fire Plan was first funded in 2001.

National Fire Plan Implementation Team: The USDA Forest Service's key contacts for the National Fire Plan. The team is headed by the National Fire Plan Coordinator.

National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC): "The nation's support center for wildland firefighting." Seven federal agencies participate in the NIFC, based in Boise, ID, which coordinates the allocation of resources for fires and enables agencies and centers to share firefighting supplies, equipment, and personnel.
<http://www.nifc.gov/>

National Wildfire Coordination Group (NWCG): A national-level interagency group, with input from the States, formed under the direction of the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture to improve coordination and effectiveness of wildland fire activities and provide a cross-jurisdictional forum to discuss issues and resolve problems.

Occluded community: A category of community in the wildland urban interface characterized by an island of wildland fuel, such as a park, amidst a matrix of structures.

Office of Wildland Fire Coordinator: An office in the U.S. Department of Interior established in January, 2001 to integrate the fire management programs of the Department's land management and related agencies.

Operations: A budget item of the National Fire Plan that funds fire suppression, fire facilities, hazardous fuel reduction, research and development, and rehabilitation.

Preparedness: Condition of being ready to deal with a potential fire situation. Also, a budget item of the National Fire Plan that funds agencies to reach a state of firefighting readiness.

Prescribed burning: Controlled application of fire to wildland fuels either in a natural or modified state to obtain a desired resource management objective and reduce the amount of vegetative fuels.

Rehabilitation/Restoration: Management activity done in an ecosystem after a severe fire disturbance such as the stabilization of soils, slopes, and stream banks; re-opening of stream channels; revegetation of severely burned areas; and the removal of invasive weeds.

Rural Fire Assistance: A Department of the Interior program that supports rural fire departments with technical assistance, training, supplies, equipment, and public education.

State Fire Assistance: A USDA Forest Service program that provides technical and financial support to States to enhance local firefighting capacity.

Succession: The gradual supplanting of one community of plants by another. The way in which succession occurs depends on a variety of

factors including the conditions and existing vegetation of the site.

10 Year Comprehensive Strategy: A strategy for addressing wildland fire risk developed collaboratively by federal agencies, the Western Governors' Association, the National Association of Counties, and the National Association of State Foresters.

Thinning: The removal of immature trees to reduce overcrowding without permanently breaking the forest canopy.

Understory: The shrubs and plants that grow beneath the main canopy of a forest.

Value-added processing: A way of increasing economic returns from forest products through preparation, improvement, refinement, or finishing.

Volunteer Fire Assistance: A Federal grant program, administered by the USDA Forest Service in cooperation with the State Foresters, that provides funds for fire equipment, training, and initial fire department organization to fire departments serving small communities with populations under 10,000.

Wildland Fire Steering Group: A team of representatives of the Department of the Interior's four land management agencies and from the Forest Service's National Fire Plan Implementation Team that provides leadership and oversight for the fuels management program.

Wildland-Urban Interface: Geographic line, area, or zone where structures and other human development meet or intermingle with undeveloped wildland or vegetative fuels.

Youth Conservation Corps: A summer employment program for young men and women, ages 15 through 18, to work and learn by doing projects on public land. The program is administered by the USDA Forest Service and the USDOI's Fish and Wildlife and National Park Service. Information and applications are available at:
<http://www.fs.fed.us/people/programs/ycc.htm>

KEY POINTS OF THE NATIONAL FIRE PLAN

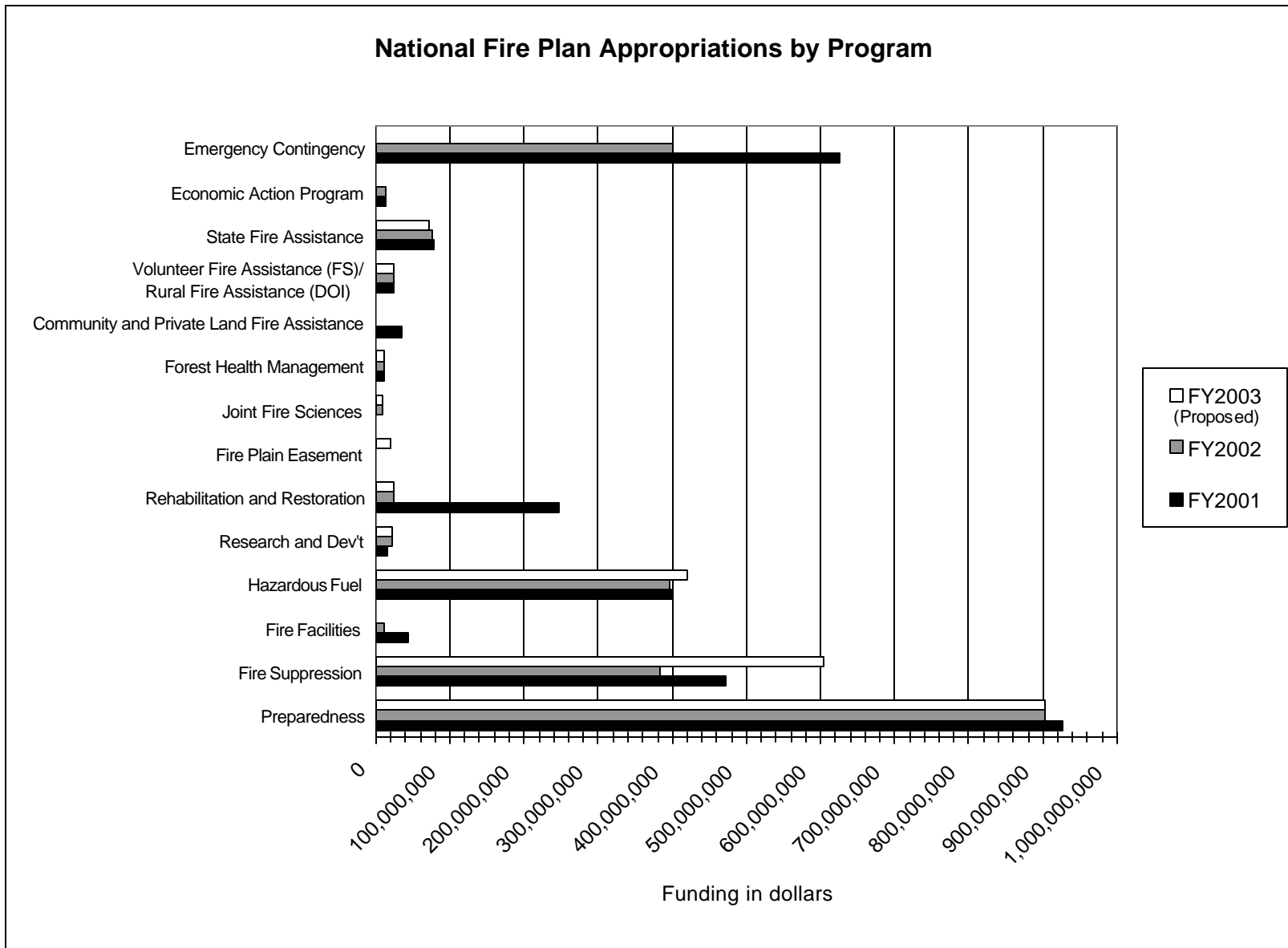
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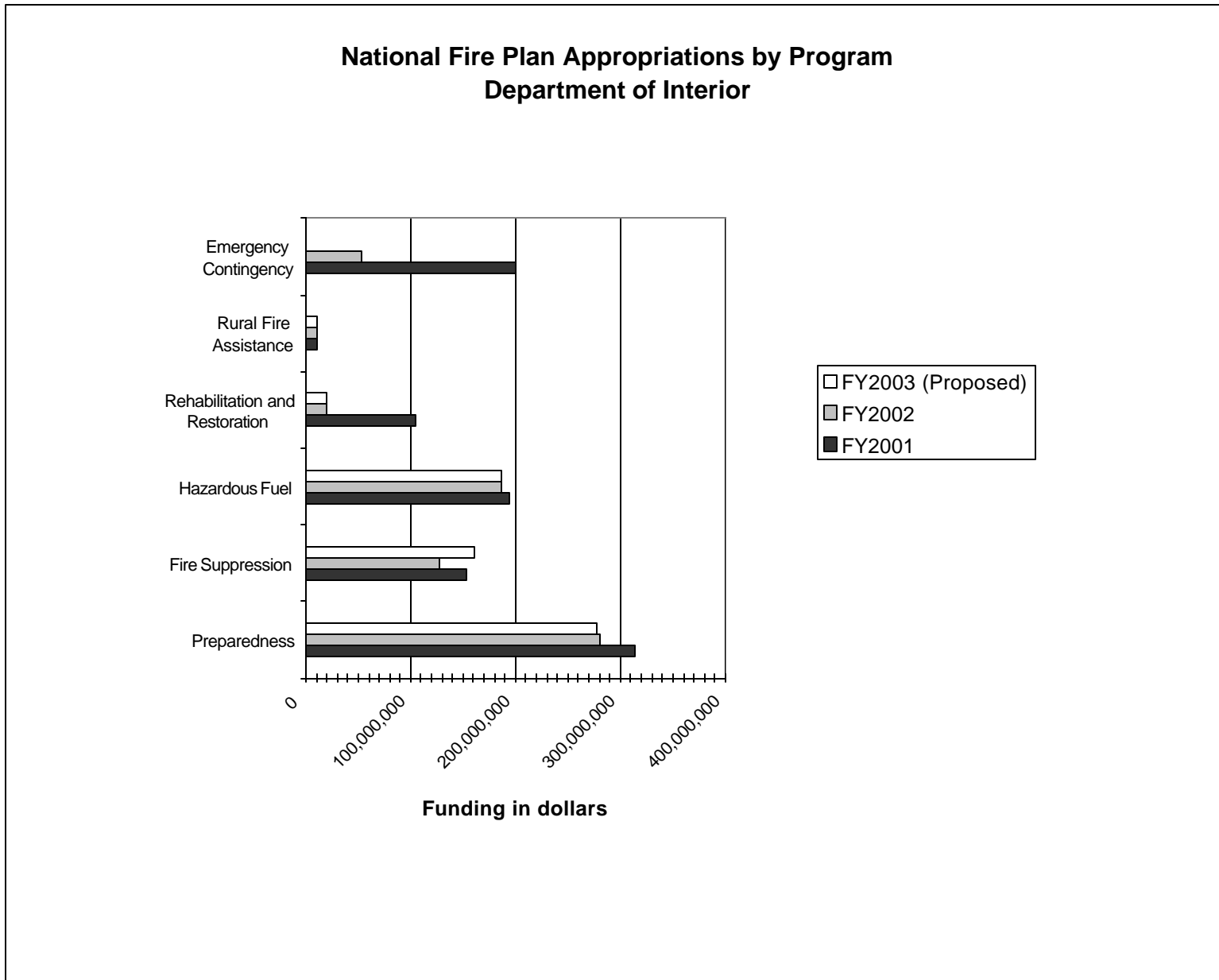
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III. Hazardous Fuels Reduction

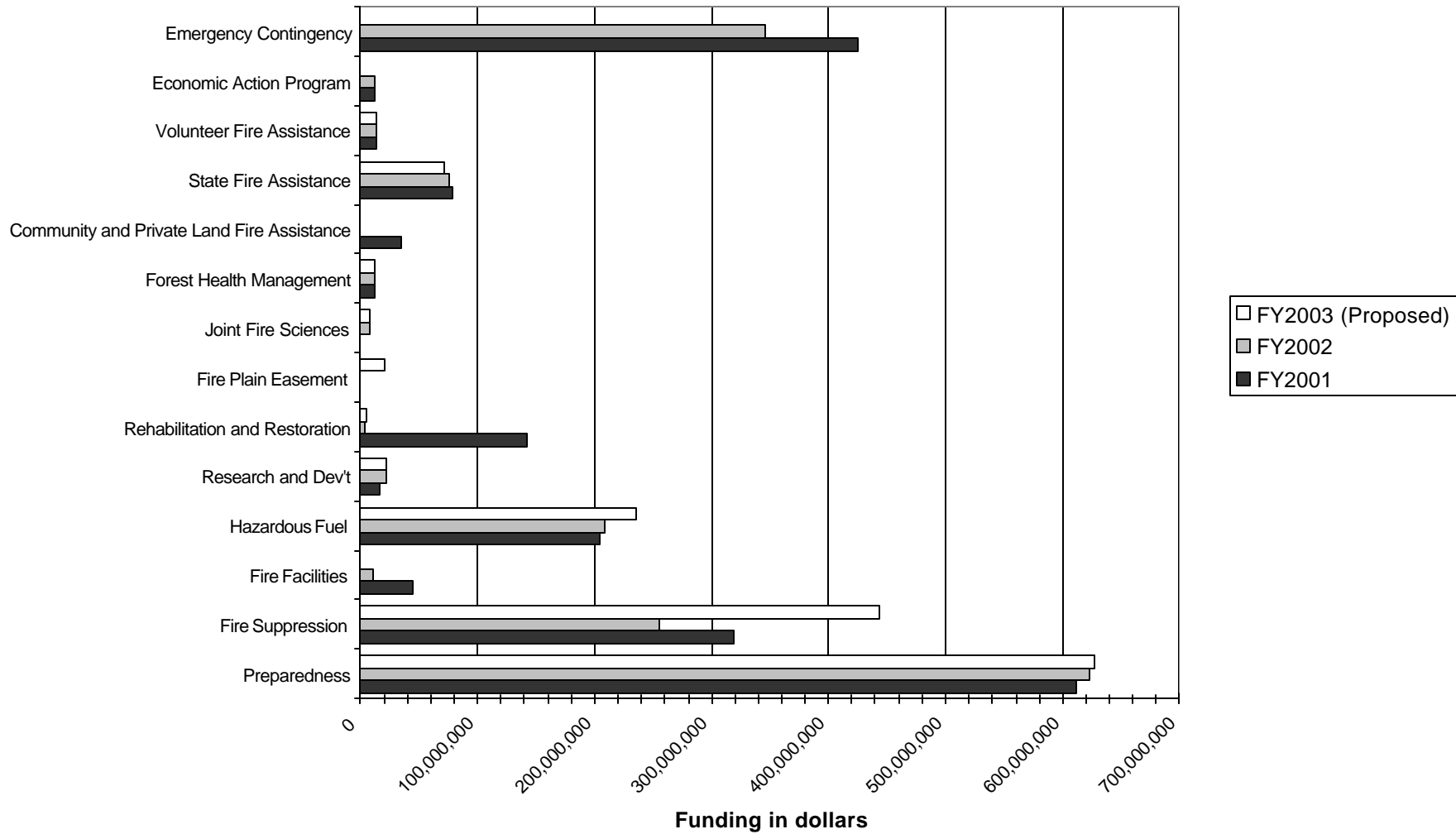
IV. Community Assistance

V. Accountability

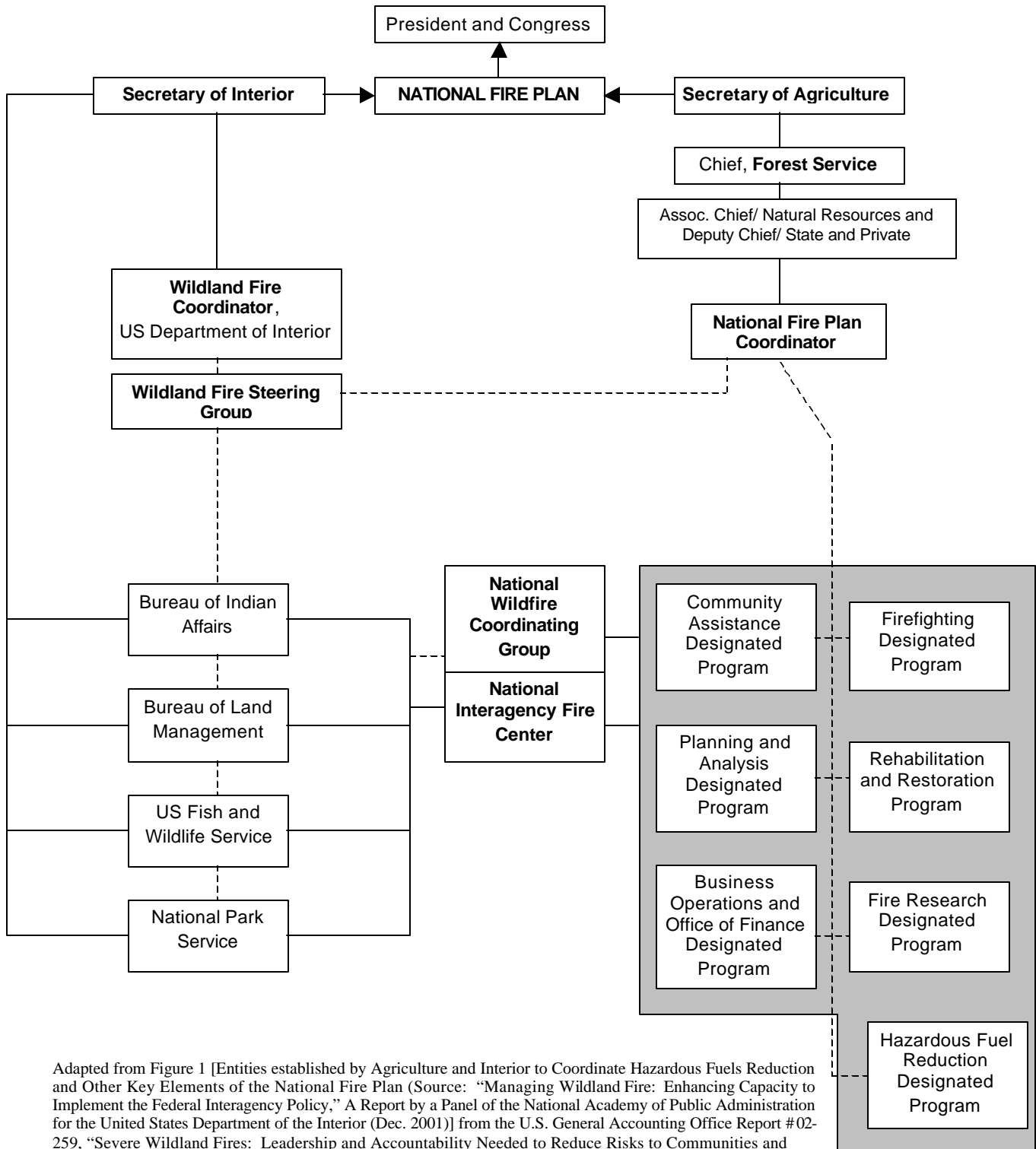




National Fire Plan Appropriations by Program USDA Forest Service



Federal Level Coordination of the National Fire Plan



Adapted from Figure 1 [Entities established by Agriculture and Interior to Coordinate Hazardous Fuels Reduction and Other Key Elements of the National Fire Plan (Source: "Managing Wildland Fire: Enhancing Capacity to Implement the Federal Interagency Policy," A Report by a Panel of the National Academy of Public Administration for the United States Department of the Interior (Dec. 2001)] from the U.S. General Accounting Office Report #02-259, "Severe Wildland Fires: Leadership and Accountability Needed to Reduce Risks to Communities and Resources," (2/1/02).

Urban Wildland Interface Communities Within the Vicinity of Federal Lands That Are at High Risk From Wildfire – Questions and Answers for the Federal Register Notice (July 26, 2001)

Reprinted from: http://www.fireplan.gov/community_qa.cfm

Contacts:

- Janet Anderson-Tyler, Branch Chief - Cooperative Fire, USDA Forest Service, (202) 205-1494, e-mail: janderson03@fs.fed.us
- Dick Bahr, Fire Management Program Center, National Park Service, US Department of the Interior, (208) 387-5217, e-mail: dick_bahr@nps.gov

1. What is the purpose of the Federal Register notice?

The Federal Register notice responds to Congressional requirements in the fiscal year (FY) 2001 appropriations act to identify urban wildland interface communities within the vicinity of federal lands that are at risk from wildfire. The Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior were directed to consult with states and Tribes to develop the list of urban wildland interface communities within the vicinity of federal lands that are high risk from wildfire. The first list was published in the Federal Register January 4, 2001. The annotated list in this Federal Register notice supersedes the January list.

2. What are “wildland urban interface” areas?

They are areas where humans and their development meet or intermix with undeveloped wild areas that may be vulnerable to forest or rangeland fires.

3. How were these areas chosen?

States or Tribes with collaborative interagency groups compiled the information for the revised list. States worked with their federal, state, and local partners to identify the communities, the associated risks, and projects for those areas.

4. Did states and Tribes use the same process to identify communities in wildland urban interface areas?

States and Tribes were asked to follow a consistent process established by an interagency group at the national level, or state teams could use existing community assessment systems when those systems met or exceeded the standardized process. Although this state-level flexibility has resulted in some variance between state submissions, the Secretaries feel the application of a standardized process has resulted in greater nationwide consistency for the revised lists.

5. How does the information on the first list differ from revised list?

As a result of the joint and expanded effort between states, Tribes, and government agencies, the Secretaries have prepared a more complete list that better reflects the relationship between federal lands and the urban wildland interface problem in the United States. The wildland urban interface is *not* limited

to communities in the vicinity of federal lands. Many states, particularly in the East felt that it was important to submit all interface communities in the revised list regardless of their relationship to federal lands. The states feel that this addition conveys the nationwide scope of the urban wildland interface problem.

6. Why did the list more than double?

A number of states did not submit information for the first list. The revised list includes submissions from most of the 50 states reflecting a much more complete effort by the states and Tribes to identify communities at risk.

7. What does the list tells us?

The list offers a more complete picture that reflects the relationship between federal lands and the urban wildland interface problem in the United States. The list also identifies those communities around which the Secretaries have ongoing hazardous fuel reduction treatments or plan to begin treatments in FY 2001.

Because a number of communities submitted by the states are not published here, it must *NOT* be assumed that the list portrays a complete national picture of the urban wildland interface areas at risk for all land ownerships.

8. Why were some communities submitted by states and Tribes omitted from the list?

Due to the specificity of Congressional direction, the list included in this notice contains only those communities identified by states or Tribes as “in the vicinity of federal lands.” A complete list of all 22,127 communities submitted by the states and Tribes is available from the National Association of State Foresters (www.stateforesters.org).

9. What will the list be used for? Will the revised list be used to determine whether a community receives funding?

The information contained in the revised list will be used by interagency groups of land managers at the state and/or Tribal level to collaboratively identify priority areas within their jurisdictions that would benefit from hazardous fuel reduction activity. This will ensure that available funding is focused on areas of local importance and where opportunities are most conducive to reducing risks on a meaningful scale. The list will not determine whether a community receives funding.

10. Are all the communities eligible for funding or just the ones listed in the Federal Register notice?

Most communities submitted by the states and Tribes are eligible for funds appropriated to the Department of the Interior, and National Forest System lands and State and Private Forestry programs within the USDA Forest Service.

11. Once a community is identified for funding, what will happen?

Federal land management agencies and state foresters will focus special attention on these areas in a concerted effort to reduce wildfire hazards. Specific actions will vary from location to location. For

example, in some areas, contracts or grants may be offered to thin trees where appropriate, or implement FIREWISE concepts. In other areas, federal agencies may undertake other types of projects on nearby federal land or work with the states to reduce fuels in mixed or adjacent jurisdictions.

12. Why are there so many (9,600 out of 11,376) communities on the revised list that do not have hazardous fuel treatments planned?

The primary reasons for the lack of treatments around these communities are as follows:

- ❑ *Planning Requirements:* The completion of federally mandated planning, consultation, and environmental compliance activities for projects associated with the large number of communities remaining to be addressed will require significant time and effort. The Secretaries are beginning to increase staff and contracting capabilities to address this issue.
- ❑ *Community Awareness and Support:* In many areas, multiple land ownerships and jurisdictions have made it difficult for all parties to agree on a course of action. The states, federal agencies, and Tribes are working with many communities to build an awareness of wildfire risk in the urban wildland interface, and to educate homeowners and stakeholders about effective steps that should be taken to mitigate this risk.
- ❑ *Lack of Implementation Capability:* On-the-ground implementation of fuel reduction projects around urban wildland interface communities will require a trained and available workforce, not only to implement project prescriptions, but also to assist communities with utilization or disposal of removed vegetative materials. It will take time to train personnel for project implementation.
- ❑ *Additional Funding Needs:* The funding available under the FY 2001 Appropriations Act for the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies (Public Law 106-291) provides a significant start toward implement large-scale projects. The Secretaries will evaluate their needs based in information from the FY 2001 implementation process, including the scope and progress made, and will keep Congress and the Administration informed as the full extent of funding is determined.
- ❑ *Federal Role:* The federal government will prioritize projects where the wildfire threat is clearly coming from federal lands. In cases where private or state lands are an equal or greater factor contributing to the wildfire risk of a community, agencies will work with local partners on how best to fund and implement projects,

13. Once a community receives a specified “treatment,” can it be “delisted?”

States may choose to remove communities from their listing when they feel that treatments completed removed the risks that caused the community to be identified in the first place. Hazards are such that more than one kind of treatment will be needed in some areas.

14. How many communities will be assisted this year?

For those on the list in this notice in the vicinity of federal lands, 1,864 communities have projects planned near them.

15. My community was not included on this list. Is this list set in stone or can others be added?

The states will work with federal agencies and other partners to periodically revise and update this list based on collaborative efforts to formulate and prioritize hazard reduction programs and risks within each state. The federal agencies do not plan to publish any subsequent lists in the Federal Register, but the interagency teams that developed the revised list will update the community lists in each state as necessary.

16. What is the process for getting a community included or designated as an urban wildland interface area?

If your community was not listed, and you believe it should be, contact your state forester.

17. Why are the land management agencies paying more attention to reducing hazardous fuels?

Reducing hazardous fuels on public land is not new. Federal land management agencies have been conducting this type of work for almost four decades. In fact, land management agencies have already started projects on some of the areas listed in the Federal Register notice based on previously identified needs to reduce hazardous fuels.

What's different about this effort is that because of the severity of the wildfires in 2000, agencies are intensifying their efforts by starting more projects and working more closely with other federal agencies, Tribal and state governments, and communities. Also, more funding has been provided by Congress for hazardous fuels treatments than in the past, allowing agencies to accomplish more work.

18. What are the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and Endangered Species Act (ESA) requirements for treatments in communities?

Federal agencies are coordinating with the Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) on how to bring better efficiencies to the environmental analysis process for National Fire Plan (NFP) projects. CEQ has no direct control or oversight on how we do NEPA, but can provide interpretation of policy and advice on how to improve on the analysis process.

All federal agencies are required by the Endangered Species Act to consult with the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) and/or the National Marine Fisheries Service (NMFS), depending on the species involved, to insure that any action they authorize, fund, or carry out is not likely to jeopardize the continued existence of any threatened or endangered (T/E) species or result in the destruction or adverse modification of critical habitat (as designated by the Secretary) for such species. Consultation procedures have been refined and streamlined through interagency experience over the past several years.

19. What agency of the federal government has the lead on wildland fire issues and activities?

Wildland fire jurisdiction in the federal government is shared among the five agencies with fire management responsibilities: the Forest Service in the Department of Agriculture; and the Bureau of Land

Management, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fish and Wildlife Service and National Park Service in the Department of the Interior. These federal agencies are also working closely with their state and local partners to protect communities.

Community Assistance – Questions & Answers Prepared for Collaboration Coordinators Meeting by the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior (February 21-22, 2001)

Reprinted from: www.fireplan.gov/comquestions.cfm

1. Why is there a Community Assistance component of the National Fire Plan?

Congress and the Administration agreed with the recommendations of the USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior that community involvement is a critical element in restoring damaged landscapes and reducing fire hazards near homes and communities. Through the National Fire Plan, Congress provided \$176.6 million for use in working directly with communities to ensure adequate protection.

2. What funding is provided through the Community Assistance Key Point, and what programs does the funding support?

Congress appropriated \$10 million for the Department of the Interior for rural fire assistance. In addition, for the USDA Forest Service, Congress appropriated \$75.5 million for state fire assistance, \$13.3 million for volunteer fire assistance; \$12.5 million for Economic Action Programs, and \$35 million for Community and Private Land Fire Assistance. These funds complement additional dollars appropriated to regular USDA Forest Service cooperative programs.

3. What is the Rural Fire Assistance component?

The Department of the Interior's Rural Fire Assistance Program is a pilot effort to enhance fire protection capabilities of rural fire districts. Safe and effective protection in the wildland-urban interface demands close coordination between local, state, tribal and Federal firefighting resources. The program supports training, equipment purchase, and prevention activities, on a cost-shared basis.

4. How will Rural Fire Assistance projects be chosen?

The criteria for selection of projects follows:

- A Cooperative Fire Agreement exists with an Interior agency/bureau.
- The rural fire department serves a community with a population of 10,000 or less.
- The funding request is limited to training, equipment, and prevention activities.
- The rural fire department must cost-share at a minimum of 10% (including in-kind services).
- The rural fire department serves a community in the wildland-urban interface.

5. What is the State Fire Assistance Program component?

The State Fire Assistance Program is a long-standing program of cooperation with state fire organizations. The program builds shared fire preparedness and firefighting capabilities at the state level. The program also funds hazard mitigation projects and prevention campaigns.

6. What types of activities are supported through State Fire Assistance?

The State Fire Assistance Program provides training, equipment and technical assistance to state fire organizations. It supports activities in the wildland urban interface where the greatest population is affected and focuses on hazard mitigation projects targeted to reduce property loss, lessen fuel hazards, and increases public awareness and citizen driven solutions in rural communities. It also supports important education and public information activities, such as the FIREWISE workshops and Smokey Bear information and education campaigns.

7. What is the Volunteer Fire Assistance Program component?

The Volunteer Fire Assistance Program is another long-standing program of cooperation with states, to provide technical and financial resources to rural fire departments. The program supports the organization, training, and equipment needs of fire departments in communities of less than 10,000.

8. What are the Economic Action Programs?

The Economic Action Programs address the needs of rural communities impacted by changing land management policies and practices in adjacent forest and rangelands. The programs focus on building community capacity, for planning, economic development, and resource stewardship.

9. What types of activities will the Economic Action Programs support through the National Fire Plan?

Through the National Fire Plan, the Economic Action Programs will support technology implementation and state capacity building, through multi-region projects to provide market support through technology assistance, and through support at the state and community level to strengthen marketing and utilization capabilities. The Economic Action Program also will provide grants to high risk areas - where potential for wildfire is greatest - to support community planning, market development and expansion, and support increasing valuation of the products of hazardous fuel treatment projects.

10. What is included in the Community and Private Land Fire Assistance component?

The Community and Private Land Fire Assistance include five main elements. They are: fence reconstruction in areas affected by wildfires in 2000 (\$9 million), hazard mitigation projects to reduce risk on non-Federal lands (\$6 million), multi-resource stewardship planning on private land to improve forest health and reduce fire risk (\$7 million), pilot projects to demonstrate potential biomass utilization enterprises (\$8 million), and community planning for fire protection (\$5 million).

11. Why does the National Fire Plan include focused support in and around wildland-urban interface communities?

As the nation's demographics change, developed areas and individual homesites increasingly extend into forested areas. These areas offer unique attributes, but also may be areas of greater risk to wildland fire. The National Fire Plan recognized the potential impacts in these wildland-urban interface areas and focuses many activities accordingly.

12. How does the National Fire Plan address the needs of communities in wildland-urban interface areas?

In addition to the programs described above, hazardous fuel reduction activities also will be focused in and around wildland urban interface areas.

13. How will communities be identified, in and around which these activities will be focused?

Congress directed the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior to consult with states and tribes in the developing a list of wildland-urban interface communities with the vicinity of Federal lands, including Indian trust and restricted lands, that are in areas of high risk from wildfire. A preliminary list of communities was published in the Federal Register January 4, 2001. It also included preliminary criteria the two Departments will use to evaluate risk and rank communities.

14. Is this the final list?

Since state governments and tribes used different criteria in developing the list of communities, this list is only a starting point. It will be updated with additional information from states and tribes. Some states were unable to supply any information in time for the January 4 Federal Register Notice.

15. How will the list be finalized and what is the timeframe?

The Department of the Interior and the USDA Forest Service are working with the Western Governors Association and other groups to develop the approach to refining the list of communities, and to identify and prioritize specific treatment projects focused on Federal land. Development of the final list will be coordinated closely with states, tribes, local leaders and other interested parties. A comprehensive Report on High Risk Communities is due to Congress May 1, 2001.

Contacts and More Information

USDA Forest Service National Fire Plan Contacts

| Unit | Name | Position and E-Mail | Telephone | Fax Number |
|------------|--------------------------|---|--|--|
| Washington | Joel Holtrop | Deputy Chief-S&PF | (202) 205-1657; or, (610) 356-4321 | (202) 205-1174; or, (610) 325-7179 |
| Washington | Bob Leaverton | National Fire Plan Coordinator bleaverton@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-1332 | (202) 690-5774 |
| Washington | Denny Truesdale | Assistant to the Coordinator dtruesdale@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-1588 | (202) 205-1174 |
| Washington | Harry Croft | Assistant to the Coordinator hcroft@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-0587 202-714-7075 (cell) | (202) 690-5774 |
| Washington | Chris Rose | Legislative Liaison crose@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-1011 | (202) 205-1225 |
| Washington | Jennifer Plyler | Public Affairs Officer-National Fire Plan jplyler@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-1777 | (202) 205-0885 |
| Washington | Mary Farnsworth | Staff Assistant-National Fire Plan mfarnsworth@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-1298 | (202) 690-5774 |
| Washington | Dennis Pendleton | NFP Program Coordinator- Firefighting ----- Assistant Director-FAM Operations dpendleton@fs.fed.us | (208) 387-5605 | (208) 387-5398 |
| Washington | Jeanne Wade-Evans | NFP Program Coordinator- Rehabilitation and Restoration jwade@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-1454 | (202) 205-1096 |
| Washington | Mike Hilbruner | NFP Program Coordinator- Hazardous Fuels mhilbruner@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-1487 | (202) 205-1272 |
| Washington | Janet Anderson- Tyler | NFP Program Coordinator- Community Assistance janderson03@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-1494 | (202) 205-1272 |
| Washington | Hank Kashdan | Program Coordinator-Planning and Analysis hkashdan@fs.fed.us | (202) 205-1123 | (202) 690-6304 |
| Washington | David Cleaves | Program Coordinator-Research dcleaves@fs.fed.us | (703) 605-5254 | |
| Region 1 | Paul Ries | Fire Plan Coordinator-Regions 1& 4 pries@fs.fed.us | (801) 625-5253 | (801) 625-5716 |
| Region 2 | Mike DaLuz | Team Leader, NFP mdaluz@fs.fed.us | (303) 275-5749 | (303) 275-5754 |
| | Bruce Wilson | Deputy Team Leader bewilson@fs.fed.us | (303) 275-5002 | (303) 275-5075 |
| Region 3 | Ginger Brudevold | Fire Plan Coordinator gbrudevold@fs.fed.us | (505) 842-3352 | (505) 842-3806 |

| | | | | |
|-----------|------------------|---|----------------|----------------|
| Region 4 | Frank Roth | R1/R4 Deputy Fire Plan Coordinator froth@fs.fed.us | (801) 625-5281 | (801) 625-5277 |
| Region 5 | Kent Connaughton | Deputy Regional Forester-S&PF kconnaughton@fs.fed.us | (707) 562-9000 | (707) 562-9091 |
| | Ray Quintanar | Director, Fire and Aviation rquintanar@fs.fed.us | (707) 562-8927 | (707) 562-4098 |
| Region 6 | Ken Snell | Group Leader, Natural Resources ksnell@fs.fed.us | (503) 808-2136 | (503) 808-2469 |
| Region 8 | Dan Olsen | Fire Plan Coordinator dolsen@fs.fed.us | (404) 347-2347 | (404) 347-2836 |
| Region 9 | Mark Boche | Program Leader, Aviation and Fire mboche@fs.fed.us | (414) 297-1280 | (414) 297-3700 |
| Region 10 | Wayne Bushnell | Fire Program Leader wbushnell@fs.fed.us | (907) 271-2569 | (907) 271-2897 |
| NE Area | George Brooks | Assistant Director, Fire Management gbrooks@fs.fed.us | (610) 557-4145 | (610) 557-4154 |
| NASF | Jim Hubbard | Colorado State Forester jhubbard@lamar.colostate.edu | (970) 491-6303 | (970) 491-7736 |

State Specific Information

A directory of State Foresters can be found on the web at: <http://www.stateforesters.org/SFlist.html>

Links to the homepages of State Forestry agencies can be found on the web at:

<http://www.stateforesters.org/SFlinks.html>

Summaries of National Fire Plan activities contacts by state can be found on the web at:

<http://www.na.fs.fed.us/nfp/stateinfo/stateinfo.htm>

Results from a state survey issued by the Western Governor’s Association on the existing structures and processes for implementing the National Fire Plan in Western states are available on the web at:

<http://www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/fire/survey.pdf>

Forest Service Economic Action Programs

The following table contains contact information for the USDA Forest Service Economic Action Program coordinators in each Region and the Washington, DC office:

| Region | States | Contact | Phone | Fax | Email | Website |
|--|---|-----------------|--------------|--------------|---------------------|---|
| R1 Northern Region | Northern ID, MT, ND | Dean Graham | 406-329-3230 | 406-329-3132 | dcgraham@fs.fed.us | |
| R2 Rocky Mountain Region | CO, KS, NE, SD, parts of WY | Bob Dettmann | 303-275-5741 | 303-275-5754 | bdettmann@fs.fed.us | |
| R3 Southwestern Region | AZ, NM | George Martinez | 505-842-3344 | 505-842-3806 | gmartinez@fs.fed.us | |
| R4 Intermountain Region | Southern ID, NV, UT, parts of WY | Keith Schnare | 801-625-5370 | 801-625-5716 | kschnare@fs.fed.us | |
| R5 Pacific Southwest Region | American Samoa, CA, Commonwealth of Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Guam, HI, Marshall Islands, Palau | Bruce Goines | 707-562-8910 | 707-562-9054 | bgoines@fs.fed.us | http://www.r5.fs.fed.us/fpm/coop_ea.htm |
| R6 Pacific Northwest Region | OR, WA | Ron Saranich | 503-808-2346 | 503-808-2339 | rsaranich@fs.fed.us | http://www.fs.fed.us/r6/coop/programs/rca/economic.htm |
| R8 Southern Region | AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, SC, TN, TX, VA | Alan Pigg | 404-347-7486 | 404-347-2776 | apigg@fs.fed.us | http://www.r8web.com/spf/coop/rca/ |
| R10 Alaska Region | AK | Steve Bush | 907-271-2519 | 907-271-2897 | sbush@fs.fed.us | http://www.fs.fed.us/r10/spf/cf/ruralcom.htm |
| NA Northeastern Area | CT, DE, IL, IN, IA, ME, MD, MA, MI, MN, MO, NH, NJ, NY, OH, PA, RI, VT, DC, WV, WI | Lew McCreery | 304-285-1538 | 304-285-1505 | lmccreery@fs.fed.us | http://www.fs.fed.us/na/wwd/wwd00/wwd00.htm |
| IITF International Institute of Tropical Forestry | Puerto Rico, Virgin Islands | Terry Hoffman | 787-766-5335 | 787-766-6302 | thoffman@fs.fed.us | |
| National Headquarters | Washington D.C. | Susan Odell | 202-205-1385 | 202-205-1271 | sodell01@fs.fed.us | http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/eap.htm |
| National Headquarters | Washington D.C. | Steve Yaddof | 202-205-1386 | 202-205-1271 | syaddof@fs.fed.us | http://www.fs.fed.us/spf/coop/eap.htm |

Collaborative Interagency Fire Websites

National Fire Plan:

www.fireplan.gov

The National Fire Plan is a long-term, cooperative effort between the USDA Forest Service, the Department of the Interior, and the National Association of State Foresters. On this website, one can learn how the federal government and state partners are managing impacts of wildland fire. It includes information on efforts to address the five key points of the National Fire Plan (firefighting, rehabilitation/restoration, hazardous fuel reduction, community assistance, and accountability).

National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC):

www.nifc.gov

Through the NIFC, seven federal agencies share information, firefighting supplies, equipment, and personnel to facilitate efficient and cost-effective firefighting and disaster management. This website includes information on/links to: fire prevention and education, safety, and wildland fire maps and statistics.

National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG):

www.nwcg.gov

The purpose of the NWCG is to coordinate the wildfire management efforts of certain federal and state agencies so as to avoid wasteful duplication and to provide a means of constructively working together. This website provides insight into the NWCG and its 13 working teams, including those teams focused on: wildland fire education, safety and health, fire danger, and wildland/urban interface fire protection.

FIREWISE:

www.firewise.org

FIREWISE is a fire education initiative aimed at educating “interface stakeholders” – those who design, build, live in, and work to protect homes in the wildland/urban interface. It was developed by a number of federal agencies in cooperation with the National Association of State Foresters and the National Fire Protection Association. The “FIREWISE Communities” program (www.firewise.org/communities) conducts nationwide, hands-on workshops regarding interface fire concerns and effective ways to address them.

FIREWISE Workshop Dates and Locations for 2002

February 20 – 22; Hilo, Hawaii

April 29 – May 1; Snowbird, UT

May 29 – 31; Spearfish, SD

September 24 – 26; Bolton Landing, NY

October 22 – 24; Norman, OK

Federal Agency Fire Websites

Bureau of Indian Affairs: Branch of Wildland Fire Management

<http://fire.nifc.nps.gov/bia>

Bureau of Land Management: Fire and Aviation

www.blm.gov/fna/index.htm

Federal Emergency Management Agency: U.S. Fire Administration (USFA) Resources on Wildfire

www.usfa.fema.gov/wildfire/

National Park Service: FireNet

www.nifc.nps.gov

USDA Forest Service: Fire and Aviation Management:

www.fs.fed.us/fire/fire_new

U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service: Fire Management:

<http://fire.r9.fws.gov>

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