



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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OWF POLICY MEMORANDUM 2014-006

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, National Park Service
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
Director, U.S. Geological Survey

From: Jim Douglas, Director - Office of Wildland Fire

Subject: Wildland Fire Management (WFM) - Community Assistance

Purpose: This memorandum provides Wildland Fire Management (WFM) Program direction by defining the community assistance activities within the framework of WFM preparedness and fuels programs and in support of the National Wildland Fire Cohesive Strategy (Cohesive Strategy). This memorandum supersedes Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) Policy Memorandum 2014-002, dated September 15, 2014.

Background: The nature of community assistance in the Department of the Interior (Department) has evolved between the National Fire Plan in 2001 and the 2014 Cohesive Strategy. Many early efforts focused on residences within the wildland-urban interface; however, communities and agencies have recognized that additional components across the landscape e.g., infrastructure, socio-economic factors, cultural-historic values, and watersheds are also important to community health and well-being. Hence, community assistance activities occur across the landscape and are not limited solely to the wildland-urban interface.

The Cohesive Strategy is based on three goals:

- *Restore and Maintain Landscapes:* Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.
- *Fire-Adapted Communities:* Human populations and infrastructure can withstand a wildfire without loss of life and property.
- *Wildfire Response:* All jurisdictions participate in making and implementing safe, effective, and efficient risk-based wildfire management decisions.

Each of these three goals embraces collaboration by the Department and bureaus at the tribal, state, and local government and community partnership level. Department community assistance activities are an important component of the Department's Cohesive Strategy implementation goal.

The Cohesive Strategy emphasizes an "all-hands, all-lands" approach, which focuses on

maintaining, developing, and growing partnerships, including partners' roles and responsibilities. This inclusive approach allows the Department and the bureaus to focus on the primacy of bureau missions, while working to support tribal, state and local government and our shared mission realized in the three goals of the Cohesive Strategy. Collaboration among stakeholders is the key to successful implementation of the Cohesive Strategy.

Departmental and bureau collaborative efforts with communities to become fire-adapted include the following activities: 1) Assist tribes, state and local government, communities and stakeholders to take responsibility and ownership of their wildfire risk by supporting efforts to build and sustain Fire-Adapted Communities; 2) Reduce the risk and impact of wildfire to communities and tribes; 3) Partner with communities and tribes with training and assistance to live safely and compatibly with wildland fire.

Scope: This Policy Memorandum provides WFM Program direction to support the goals of the Cohesive Strategy by establishing community assistance functional area priorities, funding, tracking, and monitoring within the framework of the fuels and preparedness programs.

Time Frame: This Policy Memorandum is effective immediately and remains in effect until rescinded or superseded. Elements of this policy will be implemented by December 31, 2015.

Policy: The Department strongly supports all aspects of the Cohesive Strategy, including the ability of human populations and infrastructure to withstand a wildfire without loss of life or property. Therefore, community assistance activities will address wildfire prevention, resident safety, and prepare neighborhoods, businesses, and infrastructure for potential wildfires, including community forests, parks, open spaces, and other assets on, adjacent to, or surrounded by lands under the jurisdiction of the Department.

(1) Objectives for assisting communities and tribes include:

- Collaborative WFM activities that meet the goals of the Cohesive Strategy and DOI preparedness and fuels program;
- Enhance local cooperators WFM capacity to mitigate, prevent, and respond to Department wildfires;
- WFM mitigation and education activities identified in current Community Wildfire Protection Plans or equivalent;
- WFM activities that include multiple partnerships;
- Bureau sponsored community assistance materials (such as success stories, tools, initiatives, and other materials);
- Leveraging funds through funding matches or in-kind services.

(2) Each bureau will designate a national community assistance coordinator with responsibility for coordinating and documenting community assistance activities in that bureau. The Department community assistance coordinator is the OWF Fuels Management Program Lead who will coordinate and document activities throughout the Department.

(3) Bureaus will use a common Department system of record for monitoring and reporting these types of activities. Information within the system of record will be updated annually.

(4) Bureaus should explore opportunities to establish multiple party agreements and share costs with benefitting tribes, state and local governments, communities, and stakeholders.

(5) Bureaus will participate in developing Department community assistance business rules, system of record and activity elements for monitoring and reporting.

(6) Bureaus will submit bureau-produced or bureau-sponsored community assistance materials (such as success stories, tools, initiatives and other materials) to the Department's community assistance coordinator for posting to the interagency Cohesive Strategy webpage, www.forestandrangelands.gov, in order to make them available to other Federal, tribal, state, and local entities, and to the public. Materials are to be submitted as they are completed and/or implemented. Bureau community assistance coordinators are expected to work closely with their external communications staffs to gather or develop these materials.

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