



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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OWF POLICY MEMORANDUM 2015-003

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: Resilient Landscapes Pilot Program Guidance

Purpose:

This memorandum provides policy for the wildland fire Resilient Landscapes pilot program in the Department of the Interior's (DOI) Wildland Fire Management program.

Background:

The Department of the Interior supports the implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy), including ensuring that "*Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives.*" The FY 2015 President's Budget proposed establishment of a Resilient Landscapes (RL) program within the wildland fire management program to address broad land-health outcomes in fire-adapted ecosystems by conducting treatments across specific landscapes that improve the integrity and resilience of forests and rangelands. In the FY 2015 appropriations bill, Congress provided \$10 million in the Fuels Management program to fund Resilient Landscapes activities. The Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) will use this funding to implement that Resilient Landscapes program on a pilot scale. The pilot program uses an approach developed by the Executive Committee comprised of executive level managers representing both fire and resource management programs from each land management bureau and the Resilient Landscapes Project Design Team comprised of senior staff managing similar landscape oriented programs.

Scope:

This Policy Memorandum establishes a wildland fire Resilient Landscapes pilot program for the Department of the Interior to be implemented in partnership with non-fire DOI land and resource management programs as well as non-DOI partners

Time Frame: This Policy Memorandum is effective immediately and remains in effect until rescinded or modified.

Policy:

This Policy Memorandum is the primary guidance for the wildland fire Resilient Landscapes pilot program. The Resilient Landscapes program strengthens the Wildland Fire Management program's ability to contribute to the Cohesive Strategy goal of restoring and maintaining landscapes across all jurisdictions that are resilient to fire related disturbances in accordance with management objectives. The wildland fire approach to Resilient Landscapes uses an integrated, place-based approach of partnerships among programs, activities, and organizations to increase resilience to fire. Fire resiliency is the ability of a landscape to absorb the effects of fire by regaining, maintaining, or attaining the desired characteristic structural, compositional, and functional attributes. The amount of resilience a landscape possesses is proportional to the magnitude of fire effects required to fundamentally change the system.

The Resilient Landscapes program embraces the adaptive management principles defined in the Department of the Interior Adaptive Management policy, 522 DM 1.

Funding is Place-Based through Collaboration and Partnerships – The Resilient Landscapes program supports creating landscape characteristics that are resilient to wildfire and to accelerate treatments that reduce wildfire risks and support the ecological role of fire in fire-adapted ecosystems through a place-based approach, i.e., a discrete landscape, regardless of ownership. Funding will be provided to Resilient Landscapes Collaboratives comprised of Federal, tribal, state, non-governmental organization, and other stakeholder partners through a lead DOI land management agency.

Investments for Long-Term Benefits – Resilient Landscapes Collaboratives will be funded at a scale to provide results in five to ten years that will significantly contribute to long-term outcomes. Priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate ability to start implementation in FY 2015.

Matching Contribution and Cost Sharing – Each Resilient Landscapes-funded project will include a matching contribution in the form of funding or in-kind contribution from non-fire programs or activities in a DOI land managing bureau. Additional funding or in-kind matching contributions from other Federal, state, or local agencies, from tribes, and from non-governmental organizations are encouraged. No minimum match is required; however, similar proposals with a higher match or contributions will be more competitive.

Proposal Evaluations – Criteria for evaluation of proposals will include consistency with and contribution to the goals of the Resilient Landscapes program, with the Cohesive Strategy, and reduction of wildfire risk.

Management of Resilient Landscapes Program

The Resilient Landscapes program is administered by the OWF with support from two interagency, interdisciplinary teams.

Resilient Landscapes Executive Committee (RLEC) – The RLEC provides advice and recommendations to Director, OWF, on Resilient Landscapes program management and recommends proposals for funding. The RLEC provides executive level oversight of the implementation of the Resilient Landscapes program. Membership of the RLEC is comprised of an executive level representative from wildland fire and resource management programs of the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. *Ex officio* members from other organizations may be added by the OWF Director. The OWF Deputy Director for Policy and Budget provides principal support to the RLEC.

Resilient Landscapes Resource Team (RLRT) – The RLRT provides technical support and recommendations to the RLEC and OWF Director on Resilient Landscapes program guidance, proposal evaluation, and oversight. Membership of the RLRT is comprised of interagency, interdisciplinary technical experts designated by the RLEC. The OWF Program Lead for Fuels Management provides principal support to the RLRT.

The OWF will coordinate Resilient Landscapes program implementation with wildland fire management governance groups (e.g., Interior Fire Executive Council), the Forest Service, other Federal agencies, other partners, and stakeholders.

The Resilient Landscapes program will be managed as a pilot during FY 2015. OWF, with the support of the RLEC and the RLRT, will evaluate the pilot program and its implementation to inform development of permanent program guidelines and procedures for FY 2016 and beyond.

Prior to implementation of a permanent Resilient Landscapes program, OWF will engage in government-to-government tribal consultation in accordance with OWF, Departmental, and federal policy.

FY 2015 Proposal Process

A request for collaborative proposals for FY 2015 will be sent to bureau directors by the Director, OWF. The request will include Resilient Landscapes program guidelines, a proposal template, this Policy Memorandum, contacts for assistance (including OWF, RLEC and RLRT members), and documentation of workflow and funding request template. Proposals will be place based (with a discrete landscape boundary) and include the DOI bureaus and tribes, and other participating Federal, state, and non-governmental organizations.

Proposal Evaluation Criteria - Proposals will be evaluated and recommended for funding using the following criteria:

- Magnitude of benefit to improve fire resiliency and other ecosystem benefits, supports Cohesive Strategy, other DOI priorities, Secretary and Executive Orders
- Achievable and sustainable work plan
- Extent of collaboration
- Outcome is achievable, affordable, and efficient
- Clear definition of short-term outputs, long-term outcomes, and expected results across the landscape
- Demonstrable measures

- Probability of success
- Level of funding commitment by partners
- Extent of wildfire risk for landscape

Funded Proposals – proposals that are selected for funding will be referred to as “*landscape name* Resilient Landscape Collaborative”. Subsequent funding for Resilient Landscape Collaboratives will be allocated annually, subject to satisfactory accomplishment and available funding. All selected and funded proposals will be required to provide additional information and progress reports as requested.

Additional detail and explanation of guidance is included in the attached Resilient Landscape Program FY 2015 Guidelines.

Contacts:

Any questions can be directed to Paul Steblein, Deputy Director, Policy and Budget, OWF at paul_steblein@ios.doi.gov or (202) 606-5053.

cc: Interior Fire Executives
Interior Fire Directors

Attachment

Attachment. Resilient Landscapes Pilot Program - Explanation of FY 2015 Guidelines

The authoritative source of guidance for the Resilient Landscapes Pilot Program is the Office of Wildland Fire Policy Memorandum 2015-003. This document provides additional information to support the Policy Memorandum.

Program Overview

Focusing treatments on wildland-urban interface and critical infrastructure alone will not resolve the occurrence of wildfires that threaten key values. A recent scientific publication by the Ecological Restoration Institute (ERI)¹ suggests that although hazardous fuels treatments near communities can reduce wildfire risks to homes and people, backcountry fuels treatments are equally important to prevent the "mega" wildfires². The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy (Cohesive Strategy) challenges us to strive for “*Landscapes across all jurisdictions are resilient to fire-related disturbances in accordance with management objectives*”³. The Department of the Interior (DOI) recognizes this issue by proactively proposing a new approach that focuses on regaining, maintaining, or attaining desired landscape characteristics (structural, compositional and functional attributes) requiring management intervention at broad spatial scales and across jurisdictions in order to accelerate restoring the ecological role fire plays in fire-adapted ecosystems.

The Resilient Landscapes (RL) program is a new approach to achieve fire resiliency goals across landscapes with collaborative efforts as defined by the Cohesive Strategy. It is not a stand-alone program with additional permanent staff funded by the program. These collaborative efforts will be supported by the Wildland Fire Management (WFM) and resource management programs of bureaus to address broad land-health outcomes and the ecological role of fire in fire-adapted ecosystems through a place-based approach. RL program will place priority on proposals where landscape characteristics are at elevated risk posed by wildfire and where fire risk can be mitigated (reduce the chance of large catastrophic fires) and re-establish the ecological function of fire for enhancing or protection of critical natural resources and watersheds. RL activities will be funded at a scale to provide results in five to ten years that will significantly contribute to

¹ “The Efficacy of Fuels Treatments: A Rapid Assessment of the Economic and Ecological Consequences of Alternative Hazardous Fuel Treatments”, Northern Arizona University Ecological Restoration Institute, May 2013.

² Mega-fires are a situation as much as they are an incident. Emotions run high when they occur. They are not defined in absolute terms, using physical measures (e.g. acres burned). Instead, these are the “headline” wildfires where operational limitations, public anxieties, media scrutiny, and political pressures collide. (The Mega-Fire Phenomenon: Toward a More Effective Management Tool, Brookings Institute, 2005)

³ http://www.doi.gov/pmb/owf/upload/1_CohesiveStrategy03172011.pdf page 7. Site accessed 03/07/2015

long-term outcomes. Short-term investments should be treatment methodologies that are proven, and with monitoring, demonstrate a trajectory for the desired landscape characteristics for long-term fire resilient outcomes. These short-term investments should make a significant difference in the landscape characteristics, so that bureaus or tribes' natural resource and fire programs could maintain the landscapes without continued funding from the RL program.

The FY 2015 President's Budget proposed establishment of a Resilient Landscapes (RL) program within the wildland fire management program to address broad land-health outcomes in fire-adapted ecosystems by conducting treatments across specific landscapes that improve the integrity and resilience of forests and rangelands. In the FY 2015 appropriations bill, Congress provided \$10 million in the Fuels Management program to fund Resilient Landscapes activities. The Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) will use this funding to implement that Resilient Landscapes program on a pilot scale. All proposals will be evaluated for consistency with the Cohesive Strategy National Priority Maps and Wildfire Hazard Potential (see item 9 in evaluation criteria).

OWF, with the support of the RL Executive Committee and the RL Resource Team, will evaluate the pilot program and its implementation to inform development of permanent program guidelines and procedures for FY 2016 and beyond. Prior to implementation of a permanent Resilient Landscapes program, OWF will engage in government-to-government tribal consultation in accordance with OWF, Departmental, and federal policy.

Definitions:

- ***Fire Resiliency*** - is the ability of a landscape to absorb the effects of fire by regaining, maintaining, or attaining the desired characteristic structural, compositional, and functional attributes. The amount of resilience a landscape possesses is proportional to the magnitude of fire effects required to fundamentally change the system.
- ***Resilient Landscape Collaboratives (RLC)*** - A funded Resilient Landscapes proposal comprised of Federal, tribal, state, non-governmental organization, and other stakeholder partners through a lead DOI land management agency.

Management of Resilient Landscapes Program

The Resilient Landscapes program is administered by the OWF program with support from two interagency, interdisciplinary teams.

Resilient Landscapes Executive Committee (RLEC) – The RLEC provides advice and recommendations to Director, OWF, on Resilient Landscapes program management and recommends proposals for funding. The RLEC provides executive level oversight of the implementation of the Resilient Landscapes program. Membership of the RLEC is comprised of an executive level representative from wildland fire and resource management

programs of the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Fish and Wildlife Service, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Ex officio members from other organizations may be added by the OWF Director. The OWF Deputy Director for Policy and Budget provides principal support to the RLEC.

Resilient Landscapes Resource Team (RLRT) – The RLRT provides technical support and recommendations to the RLEC and OWF Director on Resilient Landscapes program guidance, proposal evaluation, and oversight. Membership of the RLRT is comprised of interagency, interdisciplinary technical experts designated by the RLEC. The OWF Program Lead for Fuels Management provides principal support to the RLRT.

The OWF will coordinate RL program implementation with wildland fire management governance groups (i.e., Interior Fire Executive Council), Forest Service and other national stakeholders.

Funding is Place Based through Collaboration and Partnerships - RL program aims at creating landscape characteristics that are resilient to wildfire and to accelerate treatments that reduce wildfire risks and support the ecological role of fire in ecosystems through a place-based approach, i.e., a discrete landscape, regardless of ownership. Funding will be provided to RLCs comprised of Federal, tribal, state, non-governmental organization, and other stakeholder partners through a lead DOI land management agency.

The priority in FY 2015 is to capitalize on existing partnerships, successful treatments, collaborators' support, initiatives, established processes, and existing assessments, data, and prioritization at the national, regional, and local scales.

Investments for Long-Term Benefits - Resilient Landscapes Collaboratives will be funded at a scale to provide results in five to ten years that will significantly contribute to long-term outcomes. Short-term outputs should be treatment methodologies that have been proven successful, and through monitoring, demonstrate a trajectory for the desired landscape characteristics for long-term fire resilient outcomes. These short-term investments, with sufficient investment by all partners over 5-10 years, should make a significant difference in the landscape characteristics so that natural resource and fire programs of bureaus or tribes can maintain those landscapes without continued funding from the RL program. For example, during a wildfire, a fire resilient landscape meets management objectives with reduced management interaction and damage to natural resources.

Immediate Results - Priority will be given to proposals that demonstrate ability to start implementation in FY 2015. These are generally existing places where collaborative behaviors in a landscape approach is rewarded; areas where accelerating implementation activities planned

for out-years will achieve results above and beyond what each agency or stakeholder can accomplish on its own (within 12-18 months after allocation to the lead bureau). This is particularly important during the initial phase of the program.

Matching Funds and Cost Sharing - This is not a stand-alone program with new permanent staff; it is a new approach demonstrating collaborative implementation supported by the WFM and natural resource management programs with the intent to improve fire resiliency and to accelerate treatments across landscapes. While funding is part of the WFM program, the RL program is coordinated with and supported by bureaus or tribes' natural resource management programs and funding (personnel, in-kind services, direct funding or a combination). In the first year, there is a **required match**, but no required minimum, from the lead bureaus or tribes natural resource program; however, similar proposals with a higher match will be more competitive.

All proposal participants are required to submit a letter of commitment. A template is attached. Three kinds of leveraging are emphasized in RL:

Matching funds: Matching funds means the portion of proposal costs paid for by bureaus or tribes natural resource programs. Matching funds can be in the form of funds, in-kind services, labor, or a combination. Bureau or tribal funds from the WFM program (fuels, preparedness, burned area rehabilitation, etc.) ***are not*** allowed to be counted as part of the specific bureau or tribe's natural resource program match but can still contribute towards success of the RLC goals (see cost sharing below).

Cost Sharing: Cost sharing means the portion of proposal costs paid for by bureaus or tribes wildland fire management (WFM) program. Bureau or tribal funds from the WFM program (fuels, preparedness, burned area rehabilitation, etc.) ***are*** allowed to be considered as part of the cost sharing funding.

Partnership or Contributed funds: Partnership funds mean the portion of proposal costs accounted for outside BIA, BLM, FWS, NPS or tribal funds. For example, prominent partners may include Forest Service, Natural Resource Conservation Service, Landscape Conservation Cooperatives, state agencies, universities, and non-governmental organizations. Partnerships funds can be in the form of direct, in-kind services, labor, or a combination. Contributed funds could be direct funding or other donated services or labor or a combination.

Proposal Evaluations - Criteria for evaluation of proposals will include consistency with and contribution to the goals of the Resilient Landscapes program, with the Cohesive Strategy, and reduction of wildfire risk..

Adaptive Management - RL program embraces the adaptive management principles defined in the DOI Adaptive Management policy, 522 DM 1⁴, *“The Department’s policy is to encourage the use of adaptive management as appropriate as a tool in managing lands and resources. Adaptive Management is a decision process that promotes flexible decision making that can be adjusted in the face of uncertainties as outcomes from management actions and other events become better understood. Careful monitoring of these outcomes both advances scientific understanding and helps adjust policies or operations as part of an iterative learning process. Adaptive management also recognizes the importance of natural variability in contributing to ecological resilience and productivity. It is not a ‘trial and error’ process, but rather emphasizes learning while doing. Adaptive management does not represent an end in itself, but rather a means to more effective decisions and enhanced benefits. Its true measure is in how well it helps meet environmental, social, and economic goals; increases scientific knowledge; and reduces tensions among stakeholders.”*

Process and Timeline

Successful RL Collaboratives will have a shared understanding of broad land-health outcomes and the ecological role of fire in fire-adapted ecosystems goals across the landscape.

All proposals will follow the attached templates and be submitted by the established due dates and procedures. Bureaus will prioritize their FY 2015 submissions. In FY 2015, it is expected that a limited number of proposals will be selected and funded. Proposal solicitation for FY 2016 is expected to begin in early summer 2015.

All proposals will be evaluated based primarily on the criteria described below. The RL RT and EC will provide funding recommendations to the Director of the OWF. All selected and funded proposals will then be called a “Resilient Landscapes Collaborative.”

All selected and funded proposals are required to provide additional information and progress reports as requested. Subsequent funding for RLC’s will be allocated annually, subject to satisfactory accomplishment and available funding.

For assistance in proposal development and submission, contact a member of the RL EC and RT.

⁴ <http://www.doi.gov/initiatives/AdaptiveManagement/documents/DOImanual3786.pdf> Accessed 03/04/2015

Date	Action	Description
March 20, 2015	Resilient Landscapes Program Guidelines and Request for Proposals sent to Bureaus.	Local and regional staff from fire and resource management agencies from bureaus and tribes work collaboratively at local and regional level and with stakeholders to prepare proposals.
April 17, 2015	Proposals submitted by email to Paul_Stebblein@ios.doi.gov	Review and recommendations on collaborative proposal funding by RL EC and RT commences.
May 1, 2015	Resilient Landscape Collaboratives	Selected proposals will be notified that their proposal is now a “Resilient Landscape Collaborative” and funding allocated soon after.

Proposal Content and Evaluation Criteria

Proposals are expected to be about 10 pages and will include the following sections (see attached template for details):

- Purpose, Goals and Objectives of the proposal
- Proposed Actions
- Partners and Collaborators
- Funding
- Monitoring and Evaluation Process
- Prior Investments
- Letters of Commitment from all participating organizations
- Digital boundary of proposed Resilient Landscapes Collaborative

The following criteria will be used in the evaluation of proposals (not in priority order):

1. What is the magnitude of impact of the proposal?

Will this resilient landscape proposal make significant difference in regaining, maintaining, or attaining desired landscape characteristics (structural, compositional and functional attributes) in order to improve fire resiliency and to accelerate treatments across landscapes? What is the current fire regime and condition class and will proposal be able to significantly improve the landscape? What is the relative priority compared to other proposals nationally?

2. Is the work plan achievable and sustainable?

What is the likelihood of the workplan to be successful to meet the desired condition – e.g. are treatment methodologies proven and successful clearly demonstrating a trajectory for the desired landscape characteristics and fire resiliency for long-term outcomes? Will the short-term investments (5-10 years) make a significant difference in

the landscape characteristics in order to allow bureaus or tribes' natural resource and fire programs to maintain them long-term?

3. What is the extent of collaboration?

The proposal clearly describes how their collaborative relationships will be able to endure long term in order to reach goals and objectives.

4. Is the outcome achievable, affordable, and efficient?

Are funding needs reasonable to achieve the desired condition or outcomes; What is the probability of success? What is the relationship between lesser priorities that are achievable over higher priorities where investment is too large or outcomes are uncertain?

5. What are the short-term outputs? What are the long-term outcomes? What are the expected results across the landscape?

Is the funding and landscape size proportioned so that a significant difference in fire resiliency can be accomplished to address the short-term outputs and investments (5 – 10 years) needed for the long-term outcomes? Can the proposal meet the goals and objectives? Does the proposal align with Cohesive Strategy, other DOI priorities, Secretary and Executive Orders? Does the proposal meet the needs for fire resiliency? How does the proposal contribute towards healthy watersheds, invasive species control, restoration of listed, candidate or sensitive species or other natural resource concerns? Does the proposal avoid irreversible negative impacts (monetary and non-monetary) through proactive and/or accelerated action (e.g. reducing wildfire risk to resource values, providing opportunities to manage beneficial fire, maintaining or improving threatened ecosystems and/or environmental conditions for listed, candidate and sensitive species that if listed would have a significant impact on DOI or Bureau/Tribal missions?)

6. Are the measures of success demonstrable?

Can success be demonstrated through independent biological or other objectives associated with the proposal? Is the proposed monitoring methods adequate to assess if goals and objectives of proposal can be met and facilitate adaptive management?

7. What is the probability of success?

What is the past performance in completing similar work within the proposal area(s) that supports meeting the proposal's purpose, goals and objectives; does past performance demonstrate that you have supportive conditions to achieve your objectives already in place (air quality, capacity, public support, and local priority)? Is the proposal linked to the Cohesive Strategy, bureau or tribal resource management, other conservation and

fire management plans, or Secretary and Executive Orders? Does the proposal plan and budget for monitoring and adaptive management?

8. Are there matching funds, cost sharing, and partnerships?

Does proposal demonstrate natural resource program commitment, evidenced by funding (in-kind services, labor, direct) and non-DOI partnerships in the proposal? What is the relative contribution compared to other proposals? Is it clear that accelerating implementation activities planned for out-years will achieve results beyond what each agency or stakeholder can accomplish on its own? Do the letters of commitments represent the proposal collaborators and signed by the appropriate level of authority?

9. How extensive is the wildfire risk across the landscape?

All proposals are required to submit a RL Collaborative boundary (GIS perimeter) demonstrating the area covered in the proposal. Proposal boundaries will then be overlain with Cohesive Strategy and Wildfire Hazard Potential maps to assess the extent of wildfire risk and contribution to the Cohesive Strategy priorities as described below. If the National Priority Maps or the Wildfire Hazard Potential maps are not reflecting Cohesive Strategy Regional priorities or actual local conditions, it is suggested to explain in the proposal why the landscape characteristics are at elevated risk posed by wildfire or where fire risk can be mitigated in order for the expansion of ecological fire.

Cohesive Strategy:

Verification within the context of the Cohesive Strategy National Priority Maps will help determine relative priority of alignment with the Cohesive Strategy. Two maps are particularly important. Map 1: National Priorities for Broad Scale Fuels Management and Map 4: Intersection of the Large, Long-Duration Wildfire Potential with the Opportunities Map For Managing Wildfires for Resource Objectives. Maps and background information are available at:

<http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/nationalpriorities.shtml#map1>

This site accessed 02/06/2015

Wildfire Hazard Potential:

The Wildfire Hazard Potential (WHP) map helps characterize the relative wildfire risk across the RLC proposal boundary. Maps and background information are available at:

<http://firelab.org/project/wildfire-hazard-potential>

This site accessed 02/06/2015