



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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OWF POLICY MEMORANDUM 2016-03

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: Required Updates to Fire Management Plans and Review Cooperative Agreements in Sagebrush-Steppe Ecosystems

Purpose: The purpose of this Policy Memorandum is to provide direction for required updates to Fire Management Plans and review of Cooperative Agreements for areas managed and protected by the BLM, BIA, NPS, and USFWS identified by the Fire and Invasive Assessment Tool (FIAT) areas, and for lands outside FIAT within the Great Basin sagebrush-steppe habitat.

Background: The Final Report to the Secretary of the Interior (May 2015) for Secretarial Order 3336, *An Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy* outlines a set of longer-term actions and activities with assigned responsibilities and target completion timeframes. This OWF Policy Memorandum addresses *Action Item #1 for Section 7(b)i. – Integrated Response Plans and Action Item #4 for Section 7(b)ii. – Prioritization and Allocation of Resources*, to update Fire Management Plans (FMPs) and to review cooperative agreements between Federal, tribal, and state entities in order to enhance protection of the sagebrush-steppe from wildfire.

Action Item #1 under *Section 7(b)i.*:

Update Fire Management Plans to enhance protection of sagebrush-steppe from wildfire. Updated plans will include consideration of areas and suppression objectives identified in the FIAT process, as well as reflect land management objectives.

Action Item #4 under *Section 7(b)ii.*:

Review cooperative agreements between Federal, tribal, and state entities.

Review, revise, and update, as necessary, the approach to cooperative wildland fire management agreements. Ensure the utility of those agreements to provide interagency wildland firefighting assets to address priorities including consideration of areas and suppression priorities identified in the FIAT process.

Scope: This Policy Memorandum applies to Department of the Interior bureau and office activities involving sagebrush-steppe habitat that maintain Fire Management Plans and Cooperative Agreements as defined in 620 DM Chapter 1.

Time Frame: This Policy Memorandum is effective immediately and remains in effect until rescinded or modified, or superseded by updates to the Departmental Manual and/or supplemental direction for Secretarial Order 3336.

Policy:

A. Fire Management Plans

Each bureau that manages and protects areas within the Great Basin sagebrush-steppe habitat must ensure the unit Fire Management Plan (FMP) is consistent with the direction provided in Action Item #1 under *Section 7(b)i* in *An Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy* (Appendix A.). The FMPs must be reviewed/updated by June 30, 2016 for units that contain any of the FIAT Project Planning Areas in the Great Basin, within the FIAT designated states of Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, and Utah. The FMPs for all other areas within the Great Basin must be reviewed/updated by June 30, 2017. The FMP updates must be completed through a review/validation process, FMP amendment, and/or complete FMP revision. The FMP updates will emphasize enhanced protection of sagebrush-steppe ecosystems from wildfire in accordance with Section 4 (Policy) in Secretarial Order 3336, and will:

- (1) Ensure that Great Basin sagebrush-steppe habitat, especially intact low-resilience landscapes most at-risk to detrimental impacts of fire and invasive species, are appropriately identified in the FMP and in supplemental operational plans (e.g. Response Plans).
- (2) Confirm that decision support tools (e.g. Wildland Fire Decision Support System) and supplemental operational plans to the FMPs include a sufficient and comprehensive description of strategic objectives, management requirements, and planned actions that provide for protection of sagebrush-steppe ecosystems from wildfire impacts.
- (3) Validate that wildfire response objectives for initial and extended attack wildfires reflect land management objectives, including prioritizing the protection of sagebrush-steppe ecosystems, noting that protection priorities must remain consistent with the *Guidance for Implementation of the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy*, dated February 13, 2009.
- (4) Ensure that fuels management activities in, or proximal to, Great Basin sagebrush-steppe ecosystems are consistent with land use plans (or similar) direction, and: 1) incorporate resilience and resistance concepts; 2) are designed to contribute to sage-grouse habitat conservation and restoration; 3) support fire operations and reduced fire size.

B. Cooperative Agreements

(1) Each bureau that manages and protects areas within the Great Basin sagebrush-steppe habitat must review, revise, and update, as necessary, cooperative agreements between Federal, tribal, and state entities to ensure those agreements are consistent with the direction provided in Action Item #4 under *Section 7(b)ii. in An Integrated Rangeland Fire Management Strategy* (Appendix A.).

(2) The cooperative agreement review will ensure the utility of those agreements to provide interagency wildland firefighting assets to address priorities including consideration of areas and suppression priorities identified in the FIAT process.

C. Reporting Requirements

(1) By June 30, 2016, the DOI Bureau Fire Directors are responsible for submitting a report to the Office of Wildland Fire Director that documents the completion of all Fire Management Plan updates for units that contain any of the FIAT Project Planning Areas in the Great Basin, within the FIAT designated states of Oregon, California, Idaho, Nevada, and Utah as stated in Section A of this memorandum.

(2) By June 30, 2017, the DOI Bureau Fire Directors are responsible for submitting a report to the Office of Wildland Fire Director that documents the completion of all Fire Management Plan updates for units outside of the FIAT Project Planning Areas within the Great Basin as stated in Section A of this memorandum.

(3) By June 30, 2016 the DOI Bureau Fire Directors are responsible for submitting a report to the Office of Wildland Fire Director that documents the completed review of cooperative agreements to ensure the utility of those agreements to provide interagency wildland firefighting assets to address priorities including those identified in the FIAT process in the Great Basin sagebrush-steppe habitat, as stated in Section B of this memorandum.

Contacts: Paul Steblein, Deputy Director for Policy and Budget, Office of Wildland Fire,
202-606-3053

CC: Interior Fire Executives
Interior Fire Directors