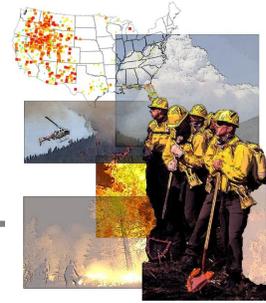


National Fire Plan

USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior

www.fireplan.gov



Hazardous Fuels Reduction

Fuels Reduction and Restoration Treatments

The hazardous fuels program reduces the impacts of unwanted wildland fires on communities and natural and cultural resources. Heavy fuel accumulations and altered vegetation composition and structure, in combination with sustained drought, are contributing to increased fire intensity, spread, and resistance to control through many parts of the United States. Fire occurrence records show increases in numbers of large wildland fires over the last two decades. The impacts caused by these fires is further compounded by the growth of communities adjacent to public lands, putting homes and other structures closer to areas where large wildland fires occur. In recent years, these changes have resulted in wildland firefighters spending more time and effort protecting structures.

In response to the risks posed by heavy fuel loads, the NFP established an expanded, intensive, long-term program of hazardous fuels reduction on Federal and adjacent lands. This program emphasized cooperation and collaboration among Federal agencies; State, local, and Tribal governments; and other stakeholders to achieve the fuels reduction goals and objectives of the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan. Fuels reduction and restoration treatments are designed to reduce the risks of catastrophic wildland fire to people, communities, and natural resources.

Such treatments accomplish these goals by removing or modifying wildland fuels to reduce the potential for severe wildland fire behavior, lessen post-fire damage, limit the spread and proliferation of invasive species and diseases, and maintain and restore healthy diverse ecosystems. Treatments are accomplished using prescribed fire, mechanical thinning, herbicides, grazing, or combinations of these and other methods.

During FY 2003, Federal wildland fire management agencies treated **2.7** million acres of hazardous fuels on Federal and adjacent lands. Of the total acres treated, **1.6** million were in wildland-urban interface areas. An additional **719,624** acres of wildland fuels were treated on Federal lands through wildland fire use. Wildland fire use is the management of naturally ignited wildland fires to accomplish specific resource management objectives including ecosystem maintenance and restoration.

The combination of prescribed fuel treatments and wildland fire use resulted in **3.4** million acres of improved land conditions that restore forest and rangeland health and reduce the risk of unwanted fire to people, communities and natural resources.

Planning

Project Planning was an important aspect of the FY 2003 program of work to prepare for fuels treatments in FY 2004 and into the future. Treatments must address high-priority needs, include local, citizen-driven solutions, and be completed in a manner consistent with land use plans and environmental goals. With an emphasis on wildland-urban interface treatments, planning and consultation for fuels reduction projects involve more cooperators and a higher level of complexity than in the past.

In FY 2003, the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior agencies continued to work under the draft Cohesive Fuels Treatment Strategy prepared in FY 2002 as the interim guidance for targeting fuels treatments to highest-priority areas. The draft strategy points the way to push high-priority areas to treat and treatment methods to use, and doing so in ways that address multiple concerns voiced by various segments of society. Early and frequent collaboration with interested citizens and the application of lessons learned from each project have led to early success and will continue to be key components of the strategy.

Fire Management Plans (FMPs) are strategic plans that define a program to manage wildland and prescribed fires and implement non-fire fuels treatments based on an area's approved land management plan. An interagency template was adopted to improve FMP consistency across agency boundaries and to facilitate developing multi-agency and landscape-scale FMPs. The Federal wildland fire management agencies committed to updating or completing FMPs on all administrative units with burnable vegetation by the end of FY 2004. All agencies are on schedule for meeting the FY 2004 deadline.

The Departments of Agriculture and the Interior established the multi-agency LANDIRE project to develop a comprehensive package of Geographic Information System (GIS)-based spatial data layers, models, and tools to support analyses for prioritization and planning of fuels treatments at the national and local levels. The spatial datasets for LANDFIRE will be maintained at 30-meter resolution. Two pilot projects are already underway in central Utah and northeastern Montana. These areas were selected based on ecological diversity, extensive plot data, and previous and ongoing fieldwork. Special care was taken to include both forested and non-forested ecosystems. Full project implementation will begin in 2004.

Forest Health Protection

In 2003, USDA Forest Service funding of **\$17** million provides technical assistance to manage and control native and non-native forest insects and diseases, and evaluate forest and tree health after fires.

- Of the total funding, **\$8** million were used to implement insect and disease prevention and suppression treatments on **781,790** acres.
- **\$2.7** million were used to treat a total of **78,675** acres for invasive weeds
- **\$5** million were used to implement a new program of prevention and restoration in areas of southern pine beetle infestations in 10 southern states and western bark beetle infestations in six western states, and
- **\$1.3** million were allocated for forest health monitoring including aerial survey and evaluation monitoring projects. These 17 projects targeted NFP issues, including fire risks, invasive species, and fire effects to determine cause, extent, and severity.

Research

Three different Federal organizations provide research for Federal wildland fire management, including the Joint Fire Science Program, USDA Forest Service Research and Development, and the U.S. Geological Survey. Colleges and universities also contribute greatly to wildland fire research. These organizations often leverage and complement each other to accomplish research goals. A Fire Research Coordination Council comprising leaders of major fire research programs guides fire science and technology transfer efforts.

In FY 2003, funding for 78 USDA Forest Service and Department of the Interior research teams that started in FY 2001 and FY 2002 was continued under the NFP. Because of the long-term nature of research, many teams have multi-year projects. Joint Fire Science Program projects are more narrowly focused and are funded for discrete time periods. Both USDA Forest Service Research and Development and the Joint Fire Science program produce annual business summaries that fully detail accomplishments.