



January 2001

To: Secretary of the Interior
Secretary of Agriculture
Secretary of Energy
Secretary of Defense
Secretary of Commerce
Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency
Director, Federal Emergency Management Agency

From: Interagency Federal Wildland Fire Policy Review Working Group

We are pleased to transmit to you our Review and Update of the 1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy (Review and Update). This Review and Update was prepared in response to a request from the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture on June 27, 2000, to review the 1995 Federal Fire Policy and its implementation.

We strongly recommend that each of you accept the Guiding Principles and 2001 Federal Fire Policy contained in this Review and Update and move forward quickly with the Implementation Actions.

Our review and subsequent recommendations took place in the context of, and with full consideration of, the September 8, 2000 report to the President from the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, ***Managing the Impact of Wildfires on Communities and the Environment: A Report to the President in Response to the Wildfires of 2000*** and the subsequent appropriations and guidance in the Fiscal Year 2001 Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act. The findings and recommendations contained in the report support and endorse those made in the Report to the President and are consistent with the subsequent National Fire Plan. However, our findings and recommendations address a broader set of topics and can best be viewed as the philosophical and policy foundation for activities such as the National Fire Plan.

The June 27, 2000, memorandum identified five specific tasks for the review. In addressing these tasks we concentrated on broad scale, strategic issues. Detailed, operational aspects of policy implementation and agency procedures are best addressed at the program management level in each of the agencies.

In summary, our Review and Update addresses each of the five tasks as follows:

1. ***Review the status of the implementation of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy and provide recommendations to the Secretaries for completing full implementation of the policy (including closing out items no longer necessary or appropriate).***

We reviewed the 1995 Federal Fire Policy and found it to be generally sound. The Review and Update contains minor changes to some of the specific 1995 policy statements and the addition of five statements to place additional emphasis on ecosystem sustainability, restoration, science, education and communication, and program evaluation. The set of revised and new policy statements are presented as the 2001 Federal Fire Policy.

In addition, we reviewed each of the 83 specific action items in the ***1995 Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy & Program Review***. The review found no fundamental flaws in the 1995 Federal Fire Policy. Experience with implementation of the policy in the past five years has demonstrated, however, that some aspects are unclear or unrealistic. Some issues were not explicitly addressed in 1995. Some items are no longer appropriate for action and should be dropped. A full accounting is contained in Appendix E of the Review and Update.

2. ***Address specific issues raised in the Cerro Grande Prescribed Fire Investigation Report and the subsequent Independent Review Board Report and provide recommendations to the Secretaries for resolving these issues.***

The recommendations in these investigations and reports address operational procedures and implementation of the 1995 Federal Fire Policy that are best implemented through program management changes. The Departments of the Interior and Agriculture are each taking internal actions to address these recommendations. We expect that additional federal agencies that adopt the 2001 Federal Fire Policy will incorporate the changed procedures and implementation measures as appropriate.

3. ***Provide recommendations to the Secretaries for strengthening the organizational aspects of the wildland fire management programs in the two Departments to ensure effective implementation of wildland fire policy.***

This Review and Update contains Findings and Implementation Actions to greatly expand the set of agencies that work together on fire management to include those with land management responsibilities (such as the Departments of Energy and Defense), those with supporting programs in science, information, and technology, and those with regulatory activities that directly affect fire management. In addition, we strongly recommend the creation of an interagency, interdisciplinary mechanism at the senior level to ensure that fire policy is implemented effectively, efficiently, and in a timely manner throughout the federal government.

4. ***Provide any other recommendations to the Secretaries that would improve the wildland fire management programs in the two Departments.***

The Review and Update recommends a series of strategic Implementation Actions essential for wildland fire management. We recommend that all federal agencies with fire management responsibilities or related programs adopt these as appropriate within their organizations.

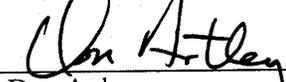
5. ***Recommend a management structure for completing implementation of the recommendations.***

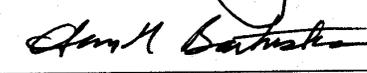
Successful implementation of the 2001 Federal Fire Policy requires coordination, consistency, and agreement among five traditional fire management operating agencies in two Departments, requires fire managers to forge new working relationships with other disciplines within those agencies, and requires the inclusion of agencies not traditionally integrated into wildland fire management activities. Although some interagency groups and committees exist to help facilitate coordination, they do not include the full range of affected programs and often lack authority to resolve differences. We recommend establishing a new mechanism for ensuring coordinated interagency and interdisciplinary implementation of the 2001 Federal Fire Policy at the senior level.

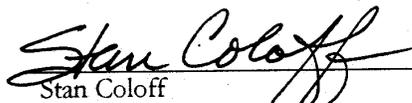
Your actions to implement the 2001 Federal Fire Policy are essential. We have identified Implementation Actions that are critical for ensuring the long-term success of the 2001 Federal Fire Policy. Appropriate implementation will vary by agency, depending on the nature of its programs and activities. Agencies with land management responsibilities should ensure that appropriate plans are in place, that personnel are trained and available, and that each agency fully participates in interagency fire operations. Agencies with supporting or related programs should implement the 2001 Federal Fire Policy as appropriate in the context of their specific programs and activities.

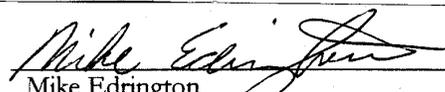
Regardless of whether agencies have operational fire and land management responsibilities, or have supporting or complementary programs, we urge that the fire management aspects of each of the agencies participating in this review be integrated on an ongoing basis – not only through operational coordinating groups, but also at the senior management or policy level. We urge you to appoint a group to develop a specific plan to implement a senior level interagency coordination and leadership mechanism for integrated program management.


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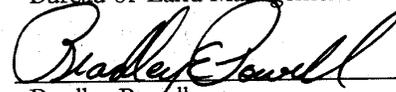

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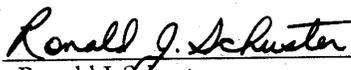

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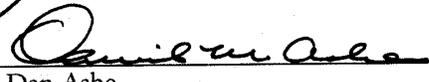

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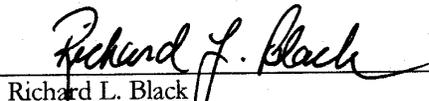

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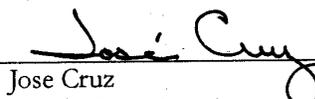

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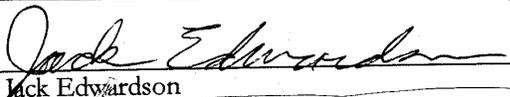

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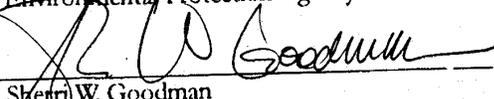

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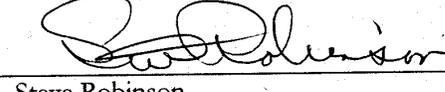

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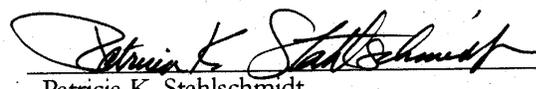

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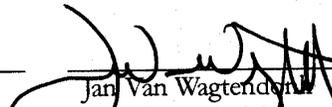

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