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For Immediate Release: June 1, 1989
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Secretary of the Interior Manuel Lujan and Secretary of Agriculture Clayton Yeutter today directed federal officials to suppress all natural fires in national parks and wilderness areas until individual fire management plans for the areas are determined to be in compliance with new federal recommendations.

The directive was one of fifteen the two cabinet members adopted from the recommendations of the federal interagency Fire Management Policy Review Team. The team was established last year to analyze U. S. Department of the Interior and U.S Department of Agriculture fire management policies in national parks and wilderness areas.

The recommendations affect fire management policies of USDI's National Park Service, Bureau of Land Management, Fish and Wildlife Service and Bureau of Indian Affairs, and USDA's Forest Service.

Lujan and Yeutter said many of the fifteen recommendations will require long-range planning and coordination for implementation, but that others will become effective immediately.

In addition to the recommendation to suppress for the interim all natural fires in national parks and wilderness areas, other directives to be adopted immediately include the following:

-- All wildland fires will be declared either prescribed fires or wildfires. All wildfires will be fought with appropriate suppression action.

(A prescription as it applies to a prescribed fire is a written statement of the limits under which a fire may burn in a specific geographic area. The limits include such criteria as weather conditions and fuel moisture. A prescribed fire is managed by qualified personnel in order to achieve specific resource management objectives. Prescribed fires may be started by management ignition or by natural ignition such as lightning. A wildfire is declared when a fire occurs in an area for which there is no prescription, or when a prescribed fire exceeds the prescribed conditions or geographic limits of the prescribed area.)

-- The responsible line officer will certify in writing daily that prescribed natural fires are within prescriptions, and that adequate resources are available to ensure that each prescribed fire will remain within prescribed boundaries and conditions throughout the next 24 hours, given reasonably foreseeable weather conditions and fire behavior. If these conditions cannot be met, the fire shall be declared a wildfire and suppressed.

Other review team recommendations include measures for improving interagency coordination, providing adequate staffing, training, research, equipment and funding, strengthening fire management plans, bringing those plans into compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, and measures for increasing public involvement in policy decisions.

ln reviewing federal firefighting policies, the team gathered input from state and local officials, private citizens, academic experts, concessionaires and outfitters, environmental groups and business interests.

Eleven public meetings were held across the country to solicit comments on the report. The public comments and the resulting findings were incorporated and submitted in a final report to the secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture.

Recommendations from the final report are attached.