



# United States Department of the Interior


OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY

Washington, DC 20240

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## Memorandum

To: Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Director, Bureau of Land Management  
Director, Fish & Wildlife Service  
Director, National Park Service

From: Kim A. Thorsen   
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Law Enforcement, Security and Emergency Management

Subject: Office of Wildland Fire Policy Memorandum 2011-1  
Department of the Interior Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation System

Attached is a new policy memorandum that addresses the persistent concerns of the Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accountability Office and Congress that, *“the Department does not have a fully open and coherent way of allocating hazardous fuels funds among bureaus, and among regions or States within bureaus. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) is continuing to evaluate this situation, but it is becoming increasingly clear that funding does not always go to the highest priority fuels projects. It is essential that scarce program dollars are used for projects which have the greatest benefit to the Nation.”*

The new policy will satisfy Section 503 (b) (a) (5) of the FY 2010 Interior Appropriations Act, that requires the Secretary to *“submit to Congress a report that contains a cohesive wildfire management strategy, consistent with the recommendations described in recent reports of the Government Accountability Office regarding management strategies ... that shall provide for ... the allocation of hazardous fuels reduction funds based on the priority of hazardous fuels reduction projects.”*

This policy has been developed in close coordination with your fire directors. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact Kirk Rowdabaugh at (202) 606-3447.

Attachment

**Office of Wildland Fire Policy 2011-1  
DOI Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation System (HFPAS)**

**Purpose:**

This policy establishes the Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation System (HFPAS) as a common, transparent, and systematic process for the Department of the Interior (DOI). HFPAS ensures the Department's Hazardous Fuels Reduction (HFR) funds are allocated to high priority projects in high priority areas. HFR funds are provided to the bureaus to mitigate risks from wildfire to communities and valued landscapes. This policy replaces the previously published memorandum "Fuel Treatment Program Development and Collaboration Process" dated March 20, 2002.

The DOI is committed to reducing risk to communities, maintaining and restoring valued landscapes, providing economic opportunities, and responding safely and effectively to wildland fire incidents. This commitment includes working in collaboration with Federal, State, Tribal and local partners to ensure priorities are met resulting in effective risk reduction activities.

**Background:**

HFPAS builds upon the foundation of the past with the *Healthy Forests Restoration Act*; the *National Fire Plan*; and the *10-Year Comprehensive Strategy*; and aligns for the future with the *Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act* of 2009, and the mandated work and opportunities in the development of the *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy*.

The Congress, Government Accountability Office (GAO), and Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in communication with Interior budget leadership have called on the agencies to "continue to improve their processes for allocating fuel reduction funds and selecting fuel reduction projects."<sup>1</sup>

The Department has committed to "have in place an interagency process that assesses local and State priorities with nationally common criteria to determine the highest priority projects in the highest priority areas."<sup>2</sup>

**Scope:**

The Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation System will be used to establish the allocation of the Hazardous Fuels Reduction funding within the Department.

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<sup>1</sup> DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR – Major Management Challenges (GAO-09-425T)

<sup>2</sup> Report to Congress on Allocating Fuels Funding, Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation System, A Joint Department of Agriculture Forest Service and Department of the Interior Report

## **Time Frame:**

This policy is effective immediately and remains in effect until rescinded or modified.

## **Policy:**

The Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation System is utilized to assist management with allocating the Hazardous Fuels Reduction funds within the Department. The process will be based on a four-year program of work that mitigates risk to communities and the environment while providing economic opportunities. All projects are proposed by local field managers as a result of collaboration with appropriate Federal, State, Tribal and local partners. Selected projects will score high in meeting Congressional and Secretarial priorities, and effectively and efficiently reduce risk to communities and the environment.

The National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) is the system of record for planning and reporting Hazardous Fuels Reduction, Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation, and Community Assistance projects, activities, and treatments to meet specific government accountability requirements.

HFPAS includes the following components:

- Programmatic Funding,
- Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS),
- Project Priority System (PPS),
- Management Considerations,
- Four Year Program of Work,
- Annual Allocation,
- Bureau Implementation, and
- Evaluation and Process Adjustments

## **Programmatic Funding**

Programmatic funds in the HFPAS process are those that are not directly related to a specific project. It is the goal of the Department that requisite programmatic funding in each Bureau will not exceed 50% of their Hazardous Fuels Reduction program funding. Examples include:

- Non-project personnel costs for HFR activities, such as programmatic planning, compliance, monitoring, or administrative support.
- Programmatic level (non-project specific) planning activities, such as: clearances, National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) compliance, Fire Management Plans (FMP), programmatic level prescribed fire burn plans, surveys, Interdisciplinary Team (IDT) process, Geographic Information System (GIS) work, monitoring, community assistance (mitigation/education), smoke management, administrative support, and science support.
- Support Costs for program infrastructure, e.g. utilities, leases/rent, purchase of capitalized equipment, vehicle and equipment maintenance, physical exams, supplies, and mandatory travel/training.
- Programmatic PL 638 Tribal indirect costs.

## Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS)

Information from the Ecosystem Management Decision Support (EMDS) component of HFPAS identifies the high priority areas for the Department by evaluating environmental factors influencing wildfire potential and the negative consequences of wildfire. The Interior Fire Executive Council establishes the attributes and weights that will be used to prioritize areas. Managers evaluate the outputs from EMDS, adjust for critical discrepancies, and provide documentation of any changes.

## Project Priority System (PPS)

High priority projects are identified on a Departmental basis through the Project Prioritization System (PPS) component of HFPAS. The Interior Fire Executive Council establishes attributes and weights that will be used to prioritize projects and identify the priority program of work that meets DOI priorities. NFORS and authoritative data sources will be used for project planning, project accomplishment tracking, and to populate PPS. Planned costs associated with projects will include funding for those labor and operations costs directly related to individual projects.

Examples include:

- Personnel costs for project implementation.
- Hazardous Fuels Reduction Plans.
- Casual (Administratively Determined-AD) employees hired for projects.
- PL 638 Tribal indirect costs for projects.
- Supplies needed to implement projects (funded by one or multiple projects).
- Project level contracts: planning (survey, clearance, project plans, etc.), implementation, monitoring.
- Interagency assistance agreements for projects.
- Community assistance projects and activities.

Managers evaluate the outputs from PPS, adjust for critical discrepancies and provide documentation of any changes.

## Management Considerations

Managers are responsible and accountable for the final HFPAS allocation decisions. EMDS results (priority areas) are combined with PPS results (project priority) to identify a preliminary program of work. Management Considerations are then evaluated to develop the four year program of work and make allocation decisions. Management adjustments are documented, along with the rationale, and included in the final allocation decision package.

## Four Year Program of Work

The four year program of work will include the out year plus three years. Management Considerations and available funding are then used to produce a final program of work. The program of work will identify the approved projects, timeline for completion, planned accomplishments and how they support the Secretary's priorities, and performance measures.

### Annual Allocation

The annual allocation of Hazardous Fuels Reduction funding will provide for Programmatic Funding, the list of approved projects and their associated treatments and activities for the applicable fiscal year of the four year program of work. The funds are then allocated to each of the bureaus.

### Bureau Implementation

The bureaus implement the approved program of work and make any additional management considerations that might be needed to mitigate for project implementation issues. Management adjustments are documented, along with the rationale, and included in the final allocation decision package.

### Evaluation and Process Adjustment

At the end of each HFPAS cycle there will be an after action review conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of the process, identify any issues, and make adjustments to improve the process for the following year. For example, the attribute list and associated weighting may change based on a change in the Secretary's priorities. The updated process will then be distributed for implementation for the following cycle.

### Governance

The Interior Fire Executive Council is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the HFPAS process. The Assistant Secretary, PMB, in consultation with bureau directors, provides national priorities and direction. IFEC selects attributes and assigns weights to EMDS and PPS that reflect Departmental priorities, and makes final management decisions on the four year program of work and Hazardous Fuels Reduction funding allocations.

IFEC will annually approve a technical guidance document to define the associated business rules needed to implement this policy.



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Kim A. Thorsen  
Deputy Assistant Secretary  
Law Enforcement, Security and Emergency Management

2/14/11  
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Date

Attachment:  
Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation Decision Process

**Distribution:**

Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Director, Bureau of Land Management  
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DOI Fire Executive Council  
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## Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation Decision Process

