



July 29, 2008

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

From: Jim Douglas
Chair, Fire Executive Council

Subject: Interagency Large Fire Cost Review Process and Guidance

The high costs of wildland fire suppression, particularly large and complex incidents, are of considerable concern to Congress, the Office of Management and Budget, the Government Accountability Office, the public, and the agencies themselves. The Department of the Interior and US Forest Service have committed to taking comprehensive actions to address the high cost of wildland fire suppression and improve program management by increasing oversight and accountability through a large fire cost containment review process.

The National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) has developed an interagency Large Fire Cost Review Guidebook for use by all Federal wildland fire management agencies to ensure consistency in the review process across Departments. This guidance is intended to be used for after-the-fact reviews at the local/state/regional level to identify lessons learned. This year, 2008, we will use this Guidebook within the Department of the Interior. Since it is based on Forest Service practices we do not expect significant problems with conducting interagency cost reviews. In the coming months we will resolve any differences between Interior and Forest Service approaches to cost reviews and issue a combined Interior-Forest Service Guidebook in advance of the 2009 fire season.

An interagency large fire cost review will be conducted when an incident (single fire or complex) meets or exceeds federal combined expenditure of \$10 million.

A review may also be conducted when an incident (single fire or fire complex) meets or is expected to meet one or more of the following criteria:

- The predicted time to achieve the fire management objective exceeds 21 days.
- There are significant political, social, natural resource, or policy concerns.
- There are significant and complicated cost-share or multi-jurisdictional issues.
- The affected agency requests a review.

It is the responsibility of the agency administrator to monitor large fire cost and advise the respective agency bureau director, through appropriate channels, of the need for a large fire cost review. The agency bureau director will prepare a delegation of authority to the cost review team (Large Fire Cost Review Guidebook, Chapter 2). When a multi-jurisdictional fire requires review, the local agency administrators will determine which agency will be designated as the lead in the review process.

A list of people who have received large fire cost review training sponsored by the Forest Service in 2006 and 2007 is attached. As you pull your team(s) together, please remember the requirement that at least one person on each team must have completed this course.

The Department of the Interior is working in concert with the Forest Service to develop a process for tracking recommendations from interagency reviews to improve internal accountability.

Please ensure this guidance with is distributed to your agencies for the 2008 fire season.

Attachments:

- Interagency Large Fire Cost Review Guidebook
- Draft Delegation of Authority
- Large Fire Cost Review Training Attendee List