

**USDA Forest Service**

**Fire and Aviation Management**

### Briefing Paper

### Date: 02/21/2012

##### Issue:

##### In December of 2011, the Chief of the Forest Service signed the *National Aerial Application of Fire Retardant on National Forest System Land Record of Decision.* This decision stated the following: “Aerial retardant drops are not allowed in mapped avoidance areas for threatened, endangered, proposed, candidate or sensitive (TEPCS) species or in waterways. This national direction is mandatory and would be implemented except in cases where human life or public safety is threatened and retardant use within the avoidance areas could be reasonably expected to alleviate that threat.”

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**Maps:**

To meet the intent of the Chief’s decision, and to ensure that all fire personnel have this important information, the National Aerial Fire Retardant IDT provided pdf maps that display all avoidance areas on all National Forests that use aerially delivered fire retardant. These maps are available on the O Drive at: O:\NFS\Collaboration\FireRetardantEIS\2010 EIS Project Record\EIS\_Avoidance\_Maps

All retardant avoidance area mapping information are being merged into a national GIS layer that can be overlaid into dynamic map applications as well as WFDSS.  The product would be a downloadable ***application*** / GIS layer that fire personnel and aviation assets could utilize with whatever technology they use in the airplane, whether connected to the Internet or not. We are also working on developing other map products for use by dispatchers and others that have identified a need.

The national GIS layer will be available from the Enterprise Data Warehouse possibly as soon as this week. The location will be provided to forests and regions as soon as it has been identified. In the mean time, forests and regions can begin to verify, and update their avoidance maps in coordination with local regulatory agencies if necessary using the geographic information that was provided to the IDT for the development of the maps. Also, the base data such as NHD is currently available for use.

**Handbook:**

The National Aerial Fire Retardant Implementation Team is currently working hard developing a handbook that will include more detailed information on implementation of the Chief’s decision. We anticipate availability of the handbook prior to April 1, 2012. The handbook will include aerial fire retardant direction and guidance on topics including: avoidance maps, pilot direction, fire operations, and resource specialists, misapplication reporting and monitoring, 5% monitoring and other useful information. It will also include reporting and monitoring forms.

**Training/Information Sharing:**

The team is preparing information for sharing and will be coordinating with regional fire training personnel to offer two informational webinars for each region. One webinar will be for fire fighting personnel and one will be for resource specialists. In addition, the team will be attending various meetings to provide onsite presentations. We are also preparing materials for field use for operational refreshers or other opportunities that exist for dissemination of this important information.

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