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Instruction Memorandum No. FA IM-2013-018
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To: State and Center Directors

From: Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation

Subject: Spatial Fire Planning in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System

Program Area: Fire Planning, Fuels Management, Fire Operations

Purpose: This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides guidance related to the use of the spatial fire planning (SFP) process within the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS). This IM describes new functionality in the WFDSS application, and related requirements for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) offices.

Policy/Action: This IM augments guidance in the 2013 *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* (Red Book), the Fire Planning Handbook (H-9211-1), and the Fire Planning Manual (MS-9211).

The WFDSS is the decision support tool used among federal agencies that allows fire managers to consider fire management objectives and requirements at the time of wildfire decisions. To date, this information has been non-spatially displayed as narrative statements for each fire management unit (FMU). Version 4.7 of WFDSS (March 2013) allows users to spatially depict management requirements and strategic objectives. This spatial planning process requires users with a WFDSS Data Manager role to spatially define and upload polygons having unique management direction (e.g., resource objectives, suppression guidance, or constraints). In addition, SFP replaces FMU polygons with "strategic objective shapes." If offices convert to the SPF process in WFDSS, tabular information must be re-entered in the system to revert back to the FMU planning process.

Due to the up-front workload, limited exposure of the process among BLM offices, and the additional work to return to the previous textual FMU planning process, the spatial planning process in WFDSS will not be utilized by the BLM in 2013. Offices may experiment with SFP in the training environment, but will **not** utilize SFP in the production environment of WFDSS. Offices will continue to use the FMU planning process, utilizing the non-spatial management

requirements, non-spatial strategic objectives, and FMU polygons in WFDSS. Future guidance for SFP will be provided in the 2014 Red Book or additional instruction memoranda.

Timeframe: This IM is effective immediately.

Budget Impact: No costs will be incurred by implementing this IM.

Background: Spatial fire management planning is the broad category of efforts to utilize geospatial data in fire management planning. The WFDSS SFP planning process is a subset of spatial fire management planning which allows access to objectives and requirements based on spatial information. Therefore, it not only displays geospatial data, it incorporates management direction. Similarly, the Department of the Interior fire programs have recently started spatially displaying fire management plans in an effort to improve planning efficiency, facilitate cross-agency communication, and graphically display fire management direction.

Since 2008, BLM offices have integrated FMU polygons, non-spatial strategic objectives, and non-spatial management requirements from resource management plans (RMP) and fire management plans (FMP) into the WFDSS. The intent of this information is consistency between RMPs, FMPs, and real-time strategic decisions. After five years of experience, BLM feedback has identified the following limitations to the WFDSS FMU planning process: redundancy in WFDSS reports, objectives that appear to be in conflict within large FMUs, and non-spatial management guidance. As use of the WFDSS SFP process occurs within BLM's user community, these issues will be addressed and mitigated.

Beginning in March 2013, SFP in WFDSS allows users to create spatially-specific management requirements and strategic objectives. This information simplifies wildfire decisions by bringing only the relevant information to agency administrators at the time of decision approval, based upon the unique management direction for an exact fire location. In addition, SFP allows management requirements to spatially overlap, where an incident can be managed for multiple, complimentary objectives. These features make the SFP process in WFDSS promising, but proof of concept testing is required.

Manual/Handbook Sections Affected: This IM augments information contained in the 2013 *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations* (Red Book), the Fire Planning Handbook (H-9211-1), and the Fire Planning Manual (MS-9211).

Coordination: This IM has been coordinated between Fire Operations (FA300), Fire Planning and Fuels Management (FA600), State WFDSS leads, and the Wildland Fire Research, Development, and Applications Unit.

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