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To: State Directors, District Managers, Field Office Managers, and State Fire Management Officers

From: Acting Assistant Director, Fire and Aviation

Subject: Guidance for Bureau of Land Management (BLM) Agency Administrator Engagement in the Wildfire Decision Support System (WFDSS)

**Program Area:** Fire Planning, Fuels Management, Fire Operations, Fire Management

**Purpose:** This Instruction Memorandum (IM) provides direction for BLM Agency Administrator engagement in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) decision making and documentation process, particularly for published decisions involving multiple jurisdictions.

**Policy/Action:** The BLM Agency Administrators should maintain awareness of wildfires that affect or potentially affect BLM lands. When a wildfire impacts BLM lands, BLM Agency Administrators are responsible for the decision making and documentation process in WFDSS when a published decision is necessary (See *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, commonly referred to as the “Red Book”, Chapters 2 and 11 for additional guidance). The level of documentation by the BLM Agency Administrator in a WFDSS decision should be commensurate with the incident duration, spread potential, cost, and relative risk.

**Guidance for Published Decisions including Multiple Jurisdictions**

1. When BLM initiates WFDSS Decision: The BLM Agency Administrator is responsible for ensuring affected federal agencies are notified as soon as practicable and provided an opportunity to participate in the WFDSS decision process. Documentation of coordination with Agency Administrators from each affected federal agency should be included in the WFDSS Decision Rationale. Additionally, the Agency Administrator should continue to engage affected state and local agencies as appropriate.

Examples of WFDSS Decision Rationale documentation to be included on multi-jurisdictional fires:

**Documentation of engagement with other agencies:**

*“The following jurisdictions were engaged in this decision making process [identify all jurisdictions] and coordination between Agency Administrator (s) will be ongoing to ensure Incident Objectives and Requirements continue to be tied to each agencies’ Strategic Objectives and Management Requirements.”*

**Other agency declines engagement due to lack of threat:**

*“The Agency Administrator for the [jurisdictional agency] was invited to engage as an Approver in this decision but declined because the fire is currently not a threat to the agency’s lands at this time. Coordination with the Agency Administrator will be ongoing to ensure opportunities to engage in the decision process are provided when there is a reasonable expectation that the fire might threaten or impact the [jurisdictional agency] lands.”*

**Other agency declines engagement due to no additional impacts to their lands:**

*“The Agency Administrator for the [jurisdictional agency] was invited to engage as an Approver in this decision but declined because the fire has burned completely through their agency’s lands and no further suppression actions or suppression repair will occur on their lands.”*

2. When other agency (non-BLM) initiates WFDSS Decision: When BLM lands are included in a wildfire’s Planning Area for a WFDSS decision initiated by another agency, the BLM Agency Administrator is responsible for participating in the WFDSS decision process. If a BLM Agency Administrator requests to participate in the decision process for an incident that has BLM lands within the Planning Area but is denied that opportunity, notify the BLM State Fire Management Officer who will work to mediate the situation.

For additional information and guidance on decision making for wildfires and the use of the WFDSS, consult Chapter 11 of the Red Book and the WFDSS Training site [http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS\\_Training.shtml](http://wfdss.usgs.gov/wfdss/WFDSS_Training.shtml). For information about additional BLM requirements for the use of WFDSS, consult Chapter 2 of the Red Book.

**Timeframe:** This IM is effectively immediately.

**Budget Impact:** None.

**Background:** In 2009 the WFDSS replaced the Wildfire Situation Analysis (WFSA) and the Wildland Fire Implementation Plan (WFIP) and provides a single wildfire documentation system for use beginning at the time of discovery and concluding when the fire is declared out.

Following the fire season of 2015, the BLM Fire Planning Subcommittee conducted a review that identified a need to clarify guidance and expectations for BLM Agency Administrator engagement in the WFDSS decision making and documentation process, especially related to multi-jurisdictional fires.

This IM serves as a reminder to Agency Administrators of the importance of developing and publishing quality WFDSS decisions and provides Decision Rationale examples for multi-

jurisdictional fires. Adequate involvement of other affected agencies and clear documentation is critical because wildfire management decisions obligate money, commit people to hazardous duty, have impacts on natural resources, and determine the scope of future management decisions.

**Manual/Handbook Sections Affected:** This guidance will be incorporated into the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations*, during the next update.

**Coordination:** This IM has been coordinated between the Fire Planning and Fuels Management (FA600) and Fire Operations (FA300). It has also been coordinated with the BLM Fire Planning Subcommittee.

**Contact:** Questions may be directed to Kristy Swartz, Acting Division Chief, Fire Planning and Fuels Management at 208-387-5326 or [kswartz@blm.gov](mailto:kswartz@blm.gov).

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