United States Department of the Interior
BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS
NATIONAL INTERAGENCY FIRE CENTER
3833 SOUTH DEVELOPMENT AVENUE
BOISE, IDAHO 83705-5354

March 5, 2009

Memorandum

To: All Regional Directors, All Regions
Attention: Forestry/Fire Management

From: Director, Branch of Wildland Fire Management

Subject: Wildland Fire Decision Support System Transition-Schedule and Action Items

The Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS) was a key topic of discussion at the National Fire Management Officer (FMO) Workshop held in Boise, Idaho the week of February 9th. An overview of WFDSS was provided that gave the regional FMOs a better understanding of the system's usefulness. The FMO's agreed after the discussion that an early transition to WFDSS is in Indian Country's best interest. The purpose of this memorandum is to clarify the application of WFDSS, increase our understanding of the system, and identify the steps and processes remaining to facilitate a smooth transition.

WFDSS is structured to provide access to a suite of decision support analysis tools, document fire management decisions, and provide a long term operational plan as needed. WFDSS is endorsed by the Wildland Fire Leadership Council and National Wildfire Coordinating Group. It is designed to: 1) support the Federal Wildland Fire Policy implementation guidance update (2009) and 2) replace the Wildland Fire Situation Analysis, the Wildland Fire Implementation Plan, and the Long-Term Implementation Plan (used on a limited basis in Indian Country).

WFDSS is constructed as a web-based system but can also generate a variety of standard or custom reports. The Decision Analysis Report (DAR) represents the compilation of all WFDSS subsection information into a single report that becomes the formal decision documentation for the incident. This report was prototyped in 2008 as a replacement for current decision analysis products and will be available for use in April 2009.

Implementation of WFDSS for decision analysis is underway. All wildland fire programs at the regional and tribe/agency level should take immediate steps to begin transition to the WFDSS. To facilitate implementation, increase awareness and understanding, ensure consistency, and maximize training effectiveness the following objectives and dates have been established:

Regional Lead Designation – By March 27, 2009, Regions should identify a lead, or program manager, for decision analysis processes to support WFDSS' deployment and long term management and notify Dalan Romero of their designee and alternates as appropriate. These regional leads will be the agency contact for the Geographic Area Editors in the WFDSS organization.

Training Delivery - Training via webinars began in February, 2009 and on-line training modules will be available by user roles starting March 2, 2009. Training for completion of the Decision Analysis Report begins March 16, 2009. Reference the WFDSS web site for additional information. (http://wfdss.usgs.gov)

Authorized Use of the DAR – Effective April 1, 2009, agency administrators are authorized to use the WFDSS decision analysis process and the DAR, for unplanned wildland fires in lieu of the three current decision analysis processes.

Full Implementation Goal– By October 1, 2009 all agency and tribes should be entering all unplanned wildland fires into the WFDSS system. Initially there may be some data entry redundancy with other systems, e.g. WFMI, however our long term objective is to link WFDSS to other systems to increase efficiency. Agencies and tribes are encouraged to begin entering fires into WFDSS at the earliest practical date prior to the targeted implementation date.

There are several advantages to making this transition in a timely manner: 1) WFDSS is user-friendly, offers state-of-the-art decision tools, and provides meaningful information to base decisions on; 2) Users in Indian Country can provide meaningful input to improve the system in the early stages of its development; 3) we can take advantage of early training in Fiscal Year 2009 while it is a priority; and 4) we will be able to identify priority protection areas, communicate our protection needs to neighboring suppression units, and minimize impacts to sensitive areas from unwanted wildland fires

I have assembled a BIA Task Group as a resource to agencies and tribes in implementing modification to Federal Fire Policy and use of WFDSS. The Task Group will: 1) act as an identified pool of Subject Matter Experts to provide information, technical guidance and recommendations at all levels and address BIA-specific issues in coordination with interagency task groups; 2) present basic non-technical information on policy and WFDSS, including sources of training and assistance; and 3) offer technical training workshops for those whose needs are not met by online resources and Geographic Area training. A separate communication will be issued shortly that identifies Task Group members, their area of expertise and contact information. Another communication will follow that provides instruction on how agencies and tribes access WFDSS and associated data.

An Interagency Task Group has been assembled to update the implementation guidance for the Federal Fire Policy. Once this document is approved, several actions by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, National Interagency Fire Center will ensue. These include:

- Establish policy and guidance for use of WFDSS
- Provide training to supplement webinars and Geographic Area workshops.
- Modify Bureau policy and handbooks
- Identify and train data managers
- Provide terminology for Fire Management Plan amendments
- Assist regions and agencies with data entry and data management
- Provide assistance in modification of fuels layers
- Support agencies on implementation of strategies and tactics for long-term fires

I want to encourage agencies and tribes to register at the WFDSS website, attend trainings, webinars and Geographic Area workshops, begin entering unit-specific non-spatial data and implement a calibration process for LANDFIRE data based on local knowledge. The Intertribal Timber Council is hosting a workshop on Monday, April 20, 2009 during the 2009 Symposium to provide information on the modifications to the Federal Fire Policy and WFDSS. I strongly encourage FMO attendance at this workshop.

Please feel free to contact Dennis Dupuis at (208) 387-5041 or Dalan Romero at (208) 387-5372 for further information. I look forward to a smooth transition and encourage all fire management staff to take every opportunity to gather information and train in the use of WFDSS.