



In Response Reply To:
Region 8-ES

United States Department of the Interior


FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE
California and Nevada Region
2800 Cottage Way, Room W-2606
Sacramento, California 95825-1846



MAY 22 2008

Memorandum

To: Ecological Services Project Leaders, Region 8 Sacramento, California

From: Acting Regional Director, Region 8 Sacramento, California 

Subject: 2008 Fire Season Coordination with Land Management Agencies and Local Fire Authorities

The 2008 fire season is upon us, and although predictions are for a relatively normal season, the dry months of March and April have caused our large crop of annual grasses to cure earlier than normal. This may bring an early start to our fire season. Because of the high grass fuel load, desert areas such as the Mohave, Coachella desert valleys, and Antelope Valley will likely have a more active fire season with a greater number of large fires, particularly through July.

To prepare for this fire season, I want you and your staffs to take the following steps immediately:

1. Renew regular communications with your local Forest Service Supervisors, Bureau of Land Management Area Managers, National Park Service Supervisors, Federal Emergency Management Agency representatives, Tribes, Cal Fire, county officials, and other agency counterparts that deal with fuel reduction and fire management.
2. Let them know that each of your offices is prepared to assist and expeditiously process Endangered Species Act section 7 consultations on fuel reduction projects, and that fire emergency preparedness is your highest priority.
3. Designate a lead staff person in your office to make sure that proper coordination is carried out as described above. This person will give periodic updates in writing (via email) on a monthly basis describing your office's implementation of the above direction. Please continue sending reports to Vicki Campbell in the regional office.
4. If National Fire Plan section 7 consultation funds become available, be sure to utilize these funds, as appropriate, to support staff working on wildland fire issues.

As a reminder, the Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management have the ability to complete informal consultation on their own fire projects through the National Fire Plan Section 7 Counterpart Regulations. If these agencies have questions or need help with this process, I expect your offices to coordinate and assist, expeditiously.



Finally, remember that firefighter and public safety is paramount in the section 7 consultation process. In emergency situations where federally listed species are involved, please follow any programmatic guidelines you have put in place, or where appropriate, the emergency consultation process as detailed in the Section 7 Handbook (1998). We need to ensure that there are no miscommunications, and that fire responders do not perceive a need to delay emergency responses while waiting to address federally listed species issues.

cc:

Alex Pitts, Region 8, Sacramento, CA

Doug Waggoner, Region 8 Sacramento, CA

Vicki Campbell, Region 8, Sacramento, CA