

NEWS RELEASE

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USDA: Heidi Valetkevitch (202) 205-1134

DOI: Mark Pfeifle (202) 208-6416

FIRST-EVER NATIONAL FIRE PLAN AWARD WINNERS ANNOUNCED

WASHINGTON, Jan. 15, 2003 - The U.S. Departments of Agriculture and Interior today announced the first-ever National Fire Plan award winners at the annual fire plan conference in New Orleans, La. Interior Secretary Gale A. Norton presented the awards on behalf of both departments.

"Many dedicated land managers and community members work hard every day to ensure safe, healthy forests and communities," said Secretary Ann M. Veneman. "These awards showcase just a few of the ways people are making a difference in the implementation of the National Fire Plan."

"Improving our forests and rangelands can only happen with the hard work and determination of the men and women on the ground. All of today's award winners deserve special recognition for their efforts to better protect our nation's public lands and the people and wildlife who call them home," said Secretary Gale Norton.

Also recognized were several individuals and groups instrumental in having the vision and leadership to develop the National Fire Plan and implement core components through partnerships and collaborative efforts including:

* The authors of the National Fire Plan, who provided leadership in coordinating and drafting the Secretaries' response to the request by the president for solutions to the wildland fire problem made evident by the 2000 fire season: Tim Hartzell, Office of Wildland Fire, DOI, Washington, D.C.; Michael Rains, director of the Northeast Area Research Station, USDA Forest Service; and Jim Hubbard, Colorado state forester.

* The Western Governors' Association which provided exemplary leadership in coordinating and successfully engaging a diverse group of stakeholders to develop the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy and Implementation Plan.

* Brian Waidmann, chief of staff, DOI, who has provided consistent and dedicated leadership that contributed to the seamless implementation of the National Fire Plan among the Departments of Agriculture and Interior.

* The National Firewise Team, which created a series of workshops that have, to date, reached more than 3,000 people in 47 states, helping them to create more fire-friendly landscapes and structures on private land.

Secretary Norton also recognized winners in six fire plan award categories, which are founded on the National Fire Plan's key points. The awards and the winners are:

Excellence in Implementing the National Fire Plan

- * Sami Gray, fire control officer, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Southeast Louisiana Refuges Complex
- * The Nature's Conservancy's Fire Initiative

Excellence in Firefighter preparedness, Safety and Training

- * Training Unit and Instructional Media Unit, Bureau of Land Management, National Interagency Fire Center, Idaho
- * Greg Power, program manager and Shirley Sutliff, apprenticeship program coordinator, USDA Forest Service, California
- * George Chesley, USDA Forest Service/Bureau of Land Management and Doug Ledgerwood, Matt Reidy and Jeff Pendleton, USDA Forest Service, Oregon

Excellence in Rehabilitation and Restoration

- * Mike Pellant, ecologist, Idaho State Office, Bureau of Land Management, Idaho
- * Hayman Fire Burned Area Emergency Rehabilitation Team, Pike and San Isabel National Forests, Cimarron and Comanche National Grasslands, USDA Forest Service, Colorado

Excellence in Hazardous Fuel Treatment

- * Roger Boykin, regional fire coordinator, Southeast Region, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Georgia
- * Cedar City Field Office, Bureau of Land Management, Utah

Excellence in Community Assistance

- * Ken Kaseforth, contracting specialist, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Minnesota
- * Idaho/Nevada Student Conservation Association Fire Education Corps, Jody Handly, project manager, Idaho/Nevada

Improving Accountability

- * Wiley (Pete) Horsley, office of acquisition and property management, DOI, Washington, D.C.
- * National Wildfire Coordination Group, Data Administration Working Group

The National Fire Plan was established as a cooperative, long-term effort of the USDA Forest Service, DOI, and the National Association of State Foresters for the federal government and state partners to manage impacts of wildland fire to our nation's communities. Additional information is available at <http://www.fireplan.gov>.

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