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NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Innovative Approaches and Local Partnerships Honored; County, State, Federal Officials Sign Joint Agreement to Protect Communities from Wildfire

Medford, OR, June 23, 2006 – A formal partnership that protects communities and creates more fire resilient areas on lands throughout Jackson County will be officially signed on Tuesday, June 27 in an event that starts at 1 p.m. at the Red Lion Hotel, Medford, Oregon. During this same event, awards will be made honoring organizations and individuals for their innovative commitment to help protect Southwest Oregon communities from the threat of wildfire. The public is welcome to attend the event.

”Each of us is recognizing our responsibilities to protect our communities from wildfires and we acknowledge that we are all in this together, “ said Jackson County Commissioner Dave Gilmour.“ The Jackson County Integrated Fire Plan encourages everyone to take an active role in protecting their homes and forested lands from wildland fire with over 37 organizations and agencies collaboratively working on it,” said Commissioner Gilmour.

The Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on implementation of the Jackson County Integrated Fire Plan is the agreement by county, state and federal officials to cooperate on projects and to increase wildland fire safety throughout the county. The Plan is about working together to improve collaboration on wildfire response, hazard mitigation, community preparedness, structure protection and more. It provides oversight to reduce hazardous fuels, conduct wildfire public education work and to increase fire protection capabilities in Jackson County with communities at risk from wildfire. The MOU is being signed by : Dave Gilmour, Chair, Jackson County Board of Commissioners; Dan Thorpe, District Forester, Oregon Department of Forestry; Tim Reuwsaat, District Manager, BLM Medford District; Ginnie Grilley, Deputy Forest Supervisor, Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest; Brett Fillis, Jackson County Fire Defense Board.

At the same event, local folks are being honored regionally with National Fire Plan awards for Oregon and Washington by various wildland firefighting agencies. The Forest Service, Bureau of Land Management and Oregon Department of Forestry are recognizing local partners for their ongoing efforts and support of National Fire Plan projects with Regional National Fire Plan Recognition. In addition, the BLM is presenting an individual award to Charley Martin, Fire Ecologist from the BLM Medford, District.

Recognition: Excellence in Collaboration - Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan Partnership – Awards will be presented to Bruce Bartow, Sara Nicholson, Phil Turnbull, Bob Schumacher, Sue Parrish, Gary Gnauck, and Kathy Lynn.

The Josephine County Integrated Fire Plan is intended to increase awareness and action for fire protection among fire districts, County government, public agencies, community organizations and citizens. The Josephine County Board of Commissioners adopted the Plan on November 8, 2004. Participants: Josephine County, Oregon Department of Forestry and the County Fire Defense Board Chief. The Plan was developed in close consultation with the BLM, Medford District, Rogue River-Siskiyou NF, Applegate, Grants Pass, Illinois Valley, Williams, Rural/Metro and Wolf Creek Fire Departments. Community-based organizations including the Illinois Valley and Sunny Wolf Community Response Teams, Siskiyou Field Institute, Forestry Actions Committee, Williams Educational Coalition, Applegate Partnership and others.

Recognition: Excellence in Community Assistance - Josephine Jackson Local Coordination Group – Awards will be presented to Mark Sorensen, Lin Bernhardt, Dan Thorpe, Lang Johnson

The Josephine Jackson Local Coordinating Group was formed in 2003 when the Board of Commissioners for both Josephine and Jackson counties recognized a need for closer coordination of wildfire issues. Members include representatives from Josephine County, Jackson County, Rogue Valley Fire Chiefs Association, Southern Oregon Regional Economic Development, Inc., Oregon Department of Forestry, BLM Medford District, and the Rogue River-Siskiyou National Forest.

BLM Excellence in Ecosystem Management Award: Charley Martin – Fire Ecologist Medford District An award will be presented as an individual BLM award to Charley Martin for his leadership in developing interagency county-wide mitigation plans and for his collaboration with other agencies and partners.