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Route To:

Subject: Fire Program Analysis Implementation

To: Regional Foresters

Amended Reply Due: April 1 and May 1, 2009

At the direction of Congress, Forest Service program managers and scientists have been working since 2002 across federal and state agency jurisdictional boundaries to develop the Fire Program Analysis (FPA) system as a replacement for the outdated National Fire Management Analysis System (NFMAS). That hard work paid off last June with the deployment of the current FPA system. Since use of NFMAS was discontinued several years ago, program managers have been lacking good information and analysis to support resource acquisition and allocation decisions. We now have the opportunity to support these decisions with state-of-the-art decision science.

At the onset of FPA implementation, the project team and scientists advised us that the first year should be considered a “learning platform” to identify system improvements, ensure quality data inputs and system outputs, and allow users at all levels to become comfortable with use of the system. That being said, we do anticipate using the initial analysis, to the extent practicable, in program budget development later this year.

Since the June release, fire planners and analysts at the field level have become increasingly involved with FPAs implementation and provided feedback to aid in system improvement. Based on that feedback, the system has already gone through several upgrades. While the system appears capable of handling the complexity of wildland fire management across the nation, it is evident that we will need to be adaptable and patient as we work through the initial deployment and improvements are made to data quality, system functions and scientific models.

Last fall, a staged approach for Fire Planning Units’ entry into the system and corresponding analysis due dates was developed and communicated to the field via the project. This approach included three stages, or “waves”. In December, the final “wave” accessed the system and started their analysis.

In order to provide for this adaptive implementation approach, I am revising the due date of February 15, 2009 established in my May 7, 2008 memo for completion of Fire Planning Unit analyses. This revision is based on a commitment to ensure that the system is functioning properly and that field units have adequate time to complete their analysis in consideration of other priority tasks. The revised due dates for submission of completed analysis is as follows (reference enclosed map):

Waves 1 & 2 FPU Analysis Due - April 1, 2009

Wave 3 FPU Analysis Due - May 1, 2009



Use of the FPA system to support the development and implementation of the wildland fire program, and its associated budget, is a priority for the Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. To ensure FPA's success, it is crucial that you and your line officers are engaged, providing leadership and support to ensure quality interagency Fire Planning Unit analyses. The Department of the Interior agencies are releasing a similar memo to their units revising their due dates to those above.

In the next few weeks the project will provide analysis parameters for the FPU's. These will include a specific set of preparedness and hazardous fuels options based on incremental budget changes which will be paired into alternatives. In this first year, we are limiting the number of options in order to manage the workload on the field while we gain a better understanding of the system's functionality.

Despite the challenges ahead, I look forward to the evolution of FPA and the increasingly reliable information it will provide to our decision processes. In part, my confidence rests with the excellent science it is based on and the commitment of the project team. The world's pre-eminent wildland fire scientists have served in key positions on the science team. With their involvement, we are also working to merge FPA with other systems such as the Hazardous Fuels Prioritization and Allocation System. As we work out the system bugs, the underlying state-of-the-art science will shine through and help us all make better program management decisions.

Your continued feedback will be important and help us improve the system and its future application. Questions should be directed to Bonnie Wood, Forest Service FPA Business Lead at 208-947-3774 or Bill Breedlove, Branch Chief Fire Planning at 202-306-2127.

/s/ James E. Hubbard

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