

PROTECTING LIVES, RESOURCES, AND PROPERTY



WILDLAND FIRE

Under the leadership of this Administration, and with the support of Congress, Federal wildland fire agencies have made significant strides in improving their ability to protect lives, resources, and property. For example, the Department of the Interior had a 97 percent success rate for containing unwanted wildfires on initial attack during the 2003 fire season. The 2005 budget for Wildland Fire Management builds on past successes by proposing targeted preparedness increases primarily aimed at maintaining this initial attack capability and improving the cost-effectiveness of the fire program, especially in emergency fire suppression.

While satisfied with the rate at which fires are contained on initial attack, the Department will continue to pursue management and operational improvements to enhance the cost-effectiveness of the fire program. The budget request includes increases of \$2.9 million to continue development and implementation of the fire program analysis system and \$3.7 million to develop the LANDFIRE technology for vegetation imaging and mapping. Among other things, these tools will provide managers with scientific information to develop more

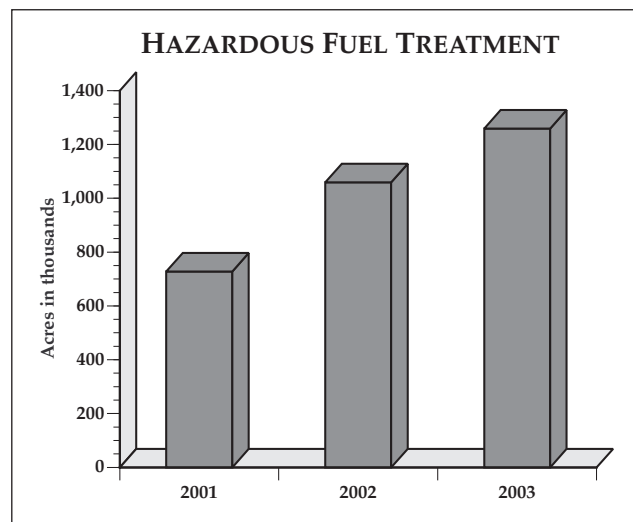
cost-effective strategies for positioning readiness resources and for prioritizing hazardous fuels reduction projects.

The 2005 budget funds suppression operations at \$221.5 million, the 10-year average. The relatively few wildland fires that escape initial attack and grow into large fires consume the preponderance of suppression funds. During 2004, the Wildland Fire Management program will continue to study suppression strategies and tactics to gain a better understanding of cost drivers and to explore opportunities for better constraining these costs.

HEALTHY FORESTS INITIATIVE

One key to reducing fire risks costs over the long term is to reduce the build up of hazardous fuels in forests and on rangelands. Through implementation of the Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and to Environment

10-year Comprehensive Strategy, with its emphasis on collaboration and improved program and financial management, the productivity of the Department's hazardous fuels reduction program has increased significantly. In 2003, the Department's wildland fire agencies reduced



fuels on nearly 1.3 million acres, as compared to 728,112 acres in 2001. Treatments in the wildland urban interface were 480,110 acres, up from 164,337 acres in 2001.

However, the scope of the hazardous fuels problem demands an even more aggressive response, as



called for in the President's Healthy Forests Initiative. Years of buildup of brush and unnaturally dense tree stands, coupled with drought, insect infestation, and disease, have left 190 million acres of Federal forests and rangelands highly vulnerable to catastrophic fires. On December 3, 2003, after months of working with a bipartisan coalition of members of Congress, President Bush signed into law the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003 to



reduce the threat of destructive wildfires, restore forest and rangeland health, and to encourage public participation in decisionmaking, including project selection and implementation.

The 2005 budget for the Department's wildland fire program includes \$209.3 million for hazardous fuels funding, a program increase of \$25.0 mil-

lion to enable the fire program to treat additional high-priority acres in the wildland urban interface in 2005. An important new monitoring program to determine the effectiveness of hazardous fuel reduction projects in achieving program goals will help Interior to further improve the cost-efficient management of both the fuels program and the wildland fire program as a whole. Results from project monitoring will be shared among fuels reduction project managers, giving them scientific information they need for planning effective treatments on other lands.

Fuels treatment efforts by the wildland fire program will be complemented by forest and range improvement activities by the Department's three land management agencies and BIA. For example, the Bureau of Land Management's range management program will spend an estimated \$7.0 million on range improvements, including the removal of highly combustible invasive weeds, that will reduce fuel loads.

The hazardous fuels funding in the wildland fire program, together with funds for forest and range improvement in resource programs, will provide a total of approximately \$300 million in 2005 to reduce the build-up of hazardous fuels in the Nation's forests and rangelands.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

The 2005 budget requests \$577.5 million for law enforcement and security, an increase of \$40.1 million over the 2004 enacted budget. Priorities include full funding at major facilities during Threat Level Yellow; improving protection at international border areas for employees, visitors, natural resources and facilities; and improving the accountability and effectiveness of Interior's law enforcement programs.

The Department must operate critical infrastructure, monuments, and icons at Threat Level Yellow, providing the safety and security for employees, visitors, and facilities in accordance with procedures developed in conjunction with the Department of Homeland Security. For 2005, the Bureau of Reclamation budget includes \$43.2 million, an increase of \$15.4 million over 2004, to continue security modifications at priority dam locations. The 2005 budget proposes program increases of \$1.7 million and \$2.0 million for the National Park Service and U.S. Park Police, respectively, to pro-

vide additional personnel for security at major NPS monuments and icons. An additional \$2.0 million in construction funding is requested to construct the security fencing and screening modifications at Independence Hall in Philadelphia.

Department of the Interior bureaus manage long stretches of land along this Nation's borders. Lands managed by the Department comprise 39 percent of the southwest border, 31 percent of the southeast border (Texas to Florida coastline) and 14 percent of the Canadian border. Many areas administered by the Department face significant adverse impacts to natural resources and safety risks associated with continuing illegal activity along the border.

While primary responsibility for border security rests with the Department of Homeland Security, Interior agencies have an obligation to protect employees, visitors, natural resources, and agency facilities. The 2005 budget contains increases of \$1.4 million for the Fish and Wildlife Service, of which \$900,000 will be used for staffing along the southern border and \$454,000 will be used at the Vieques National Wildlife Refuge; \$2.9 million for NPS for increased staffing at the most seriously affected national parks, primarily along the southern border; \$1.4 million for BIA at the Tohono O'odham border reservation; and \$92,000 for BLM law enforcement along the southwest border. Funding in the Office of the Secretary of \$450,000 will support border coordinator positions to work with Interior agencies, the Department of Homeland Security, and other partners to better coordinate efforts along the borders.

The Secretary has directed 25 law enforcement reforms recommended by the Office of Inspector

General to improve accountability and efficiency. A key reform is acquisition of an off-the-shelf incident management analysis, and reporting system for all law enforcement incidents Department-wide. Increases totaling \$5.2 million are requested by the land managing agencies and BIA

for this new system, which will become the backbone of the Department's law enforcement program.

The budget also includes an increase of \$1.0 million for FWS to continue the implementation of its law enforcement zone system; \$300,000 for NPS and \$254,000 for FWS for final implementation of line authority and staffing changes; and \$1.2 million for NPS to establish a regional field criminal investigation capacity. A request of \$100,000 for the Office of Law Enforcement and Security will fund an intelligence officer position for more timely analysis of data drawing from patterns and trends reported by bureaus; closer coordina-

tion with other Federal, State, and local agencies for the purpose of data gathering and analysis; and for analytical reporting on possible threats and potential criminal or terrorist activity.

The 2005 BIA budget includes an increase of \$7.8 million to provide operational funding at eight new detention facilities serving Indian populations that will be completed by the end of 2005. A joint initiative between the Departments of the Interior and Justice provided funding over the past several years to construct 20 detention centers. Ten projects provide new detention facilities, seven replace older facilities, and three are expansions of existing detention centers. The new construction meets current detention standards and alleviates conditions such as severe overcrowding and the mixing of juvenile and adult detainees.



ONGOING COOPERATIVE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

In April 2002, the Secretaries of the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture formed the Wildland Fire Leadership Council, a board of directors dedicated to achieving consistent implementation of the goals, actions, and policies of the National Fire Plan, the 10-Year Comprehensive Strategy Implementation Plan, the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, and the President's Healthy Forest Initiative. The heads of the five wildland fire management agencies resolved several key issues such as common performance measures, common fire cost accounting protocols, and seamless direction for an effective hazardous fuels reduction program. Other cooperative efforts and strategic initiatives completed in 2003 to improve wildland fire management include:

- Finalized the formal memorandum of understanding between the States, Interior, and U.S. Forest Service that sets priorities for hazardous fuels reduction projects.
- Joined with the Federal Emergency Management Agency and National Association of State Foresters in an agreement to improve and standardize grant administration and application review process for awards to local, rural, and volunteer fire departments for equipment, training, and prevention.
- Implemented the Healthy Forests initiative designed to reduce the amount of time necessary to plan and conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects.
- Standardized accounting practices for firefighter base pay costs.
- Developed a new fire incident cost-coding system to capture and aggregate the firefighting costs of all agencies related to specific wildfires in a consistent and comparable manner.
- Standardized definitions and accounting practices for emergency stabilization and rehabilitation among Interior bureaus and the Forest Service.

Other cooperative efforts and strategic initiatives being pursued in 2004 to improve wildland fire management include:

- Completing an interagency cohesive fuels strategy to help guide hazardous fuels reduction projects and priority setting.
- Developing a strategic plan for managing aircraft resources and improving aircraft operations based on the report of a blue ribbon panel.
- Developing a new interagency fire preparedness planning process to determine optimal, cost-effective fire readiness levels.
- Developing strategies to recruit and retain qualified firefighters, especially for key field leadership positions.

NATIONAL FIRE PLAN PROGRESS

Among other successes in 2003 the five agencies:

- Accelerated and required the selection of budget year fuels reduction projects by May 1 of each year using a new, collaborative prioritization process.
- Completed a charter for an interagency Interior-Forest Service fuels coordination committee to provide senior staff leadership and guidance to ensure seamless delivery of the hazardous fuels treatment program.
- Hired, maintained, and trained a wildland fire management workforce of 15,798 personnel.
- Supported a fleet of 1,776 engines, 138 helicopters, 164 bulldozers, and 44 water-foam tenders.
- Performed maintenance and construction projects at 171 fire facilities.
- Treated 2.7 million acres of hazardous fuels on Federal land – 454,700 more acres than 2002.
- Treated 719,624 acres of wildland fuels on Federal lands through wildland fire use.
- Treated 1.2 million burned acres through rehabilitation and restoration.
- Assisted 7,731 rural and volunteer fire departments through grants, technical assistance, training, supplies, equipment, and public education support.
- Funded 6,800 mitigation and education campaigns, nearly 1,200 community plans, 4,500 hazardous mitigation projects, and trained 13,000 firefighters through the State fire assistance program.
- Conducted 14 national and 500 community Firewise workshops for more than 1,800 people.