



# U.S. Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
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## News Release

**For Immediate Release**

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### **The Departments of Interior and Agriculture Issue National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy Phase II National Report**

*Conducted extensive public outreach to prepare for upcoming wildland fire season*

**WASHINGTON** – After a mild winter and low precipitation levels in many parts of the nation, the risk of wildland fire this season poses a challenge for the Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture which, together, respond to more than 20,000 wildfires per year. Wildland fires today are becoming more complex, particularly in areas where urban populations are situated near forested and rangeland areas. To address those challenges, the two departments today issued [\*A National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, Phase II National Report\*](#), which focuses on restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes, creating fire-adapted communities, and responding to wildfires. The report was crafted by working closely with Federal, state and local governments, tribes, non-governmental organizations, and citizens.

“We have mapped out and established new levels of coordination, transparency and communication between the Federal Government and all of its partners,” said Rhea Suh, Interior Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget. “Our collaboration has enabled us to focus on specific regional priorities and to develop more focused strategies to address the challenges.”

“The Cohesive Strategy is an unprecedented collaborative planning and risk analysis document to improve response and resiliency in the event of wildland fire,” said Butch Blazer, USDA Deputy Under Secretary for Natural Resources and the Environment. “Phase II sets a strong foundation for the type of diverse interests and activities involved when wildfire strikes.”

The Cohesive Strategy builds on successes of the past while incorporating a new collaborative approach to managing a complex national problem — wildfire. This new approach includes all the partners involved in fire management and gives each a voice and a role in developing solutions to the collective problem. The Strategy will be implemented throughout 2012 using a three-phased approach and the involvement of a variety of stakeholders. It will be adaptable to different geographic scales: national, regional, and local, with a goal of promoting meaningful collaboration among stakeholders in an ‘all-lands, all-hands’ approach.

In Phase I, the national framework and goals were defined. In Phase II, regional assessments were completed to address and scale the national goals to the needs and challenges found at regional and local levels. Regional Strategy Committees representing three regions of the country—the West, Southeast, and Northeast, examined the processes by which wildland fire, or the absence of wildland fire, threatens areas and issues that Americans value, including wildlife habitats, watershed quality and local economies, among others.



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“Discussing and addressing our wildland fire problems in a national, cohesive approach is a step in the right direction,” said Randy Dye, President of the National Association of State Foresters. “We all recognize the importance of the document in framing future dialogue on wildland fire management issues. The states’ commitment to participate in the process ensured that a broad range of interests were considered and melded into the report.”

The third and final phase of the cohesive strategy will build on the work from Phases I and II, as regional and national risk-based analyses and action plans are completed. The risk-based analyses will examine potential consequences, benefits and alternative actions designed by the regions to enhance decision-making across jurisdictional boundaries.

For more information on the National Cohesive Strategy visit [www.forestsandrangelands.gov](http://www.forestsandrangelands.gov).

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