

First Annual National Wildland Fire Policy Summit

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**International Association
of Wildland Fire**

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Introduction

On February 12, 2002, the International Association of Wildland Fire (IAWF) convened a meeting of major U.S. wildland fire organizations in Washington, D.C. to discuss ways the organizations can work together more effectively to address the wildland fire problem.

The meeting, entitled the “First Annual National Wildland Fire Policy Summit,” was attended by representatives from a variety of organizations, both governmental and non-governmental (see attached list of attendees).

Among the issues discussed were the identification of major issues facing the wildland fire community, cooperation and mutual support of various different agencies involved in wildland fire, and the development of processes for addressing ongoing concerns.

The major issue that emerged from the meeting was the need for all organizations to improve their communications with each other and to work together toward implementing existing plans, such as the National Fire Plan. The group expressed interest in working together to address implementation of the “Collaborative Approach for Reducing Wildland Fire Risks to Communities and the Environment,” a 10-year strategy crafted by the Bush Administration through the USDA and USDI, in cooperation with the Western Governors Association and a number of other organizations and stakeholders. This document can be found on-line at www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/fire/.

Summary of Findings

Problems	Issues	Priorities	Initiatives
<p><i>The organizations that comprise the wildland firefighting and fire management community:</i></p>			
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>are fragmented, not always working together effectively to achieve common goals.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Local governments and fire departments feel alienated from, and not involved with national policies and efforts; ❑ Organizations and associations often not aware of each others' programs and initiatives; ❑ "Stakeholders" not fully defined. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Agreeing upon and following a unified wildland fire policy; ❑ Comprehensive involvement of "stakeholders" ❑ Work together to implement the "Ten Year Strategy" 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ National Fire Plan; ❑ Ten-Year Strategy developed by Western Governors with the secretaries of USDI and USDA; ❑ Continuation of national policy summits

Problems	Issues	Priorities	Initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>have had difficulty focusing the attention of the public and of legislative bodies on wildland fire policy problems.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Public understanding of fuel conditions; ❑ Wildland urban interface; ❑ Who “owns” the interface? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Fuels reductions; ❑ Manage development in interface areas; ❑ Protect the environment and watersheds; ❑ Restore fire-damaged ecosystems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ FIREWISE; ❑ Implementation of Ten-Year Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>have not worked together to exert the leverage needed to achieve specific actions/goals at the national level.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Implementation of National Fire Plan and pursuit of continued funding for Fire Plan. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Fire Plan funding; ❑ Communication between organizations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Become involved with the Congressional Fire Services Institute (fire caucus); ❑ Create e-mail system for stakeholders to share information rapidly.

Problems	Issues	Priorities	Initiatives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>need a better method of obtaining and allocating resources.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Continued funding for implementation of National Fire Plan; ❑ Federal funding reaching the local needs; ❑ Tying funds to achievable priorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Fire Plan funding; ❑ FEMA “Fire Act” grants; ❑ Involvement of national organizations and associations in ensuring appropriate funding at the Federal level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Streamline and automate fire grant processes; ❑ Creation of “overhead teams” where they have not traditionally existed.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ <i>need improved capability to implement actions.</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Aging workforce in wildland fire and management community presents many issues over next 5-10 years; ❑ Implementing safety recommendations, especially from fire fatality investigations; ❑ Unknown number of near-misses; ❑ Lack of preparation to deal with terrorist-launched wildfire. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Prepare for workforce transition; ❑ Recruitment and retention; ❑ Training, particularly for safety; ❑ Develop an understanding of the terrorist risk/potential 	<p>Existing programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ❑ Risk Threshold and transition from Initial Response to Extended Attack; ❑ IAFC’s “near-miss” program; ❑ SafeNet; ❑ Simulation Training

Conclusions

1. There was consensus that wildland fire organizations and agencies need to work more closely together on common concerns and to address improvements in national wildland fire policy. In addition, there are other stakeholders who need to be involved in future meetings.
2. Several attendees registered surprise that important information was not getting adequate distribution.
3. There was much discussion of the Ten Year Strategy document, and a desire to participate in the implementation plan. The document can be viewed online at: www.westgov.org/wga/initiatives/fire/default.htm
4. The people at the local level (city and county government, local fire departments) need to be better represented in decision-making that impacts national policy. Once policy or programs have been created, these local organizations need to be informed and involved.
5. The wildland fire community needs to be concerned about the potential of wildfire, particularly in the wildland-urban interface, as a terrorist weapon.
6. The issues of wildland fire management is a continuing issues, like forest management or homeland defense.
7. Attaining common goals will require input, participation and resources from a wide variety of organizations, including those from governmental, non-profit and private sectors.
8. This summit meeting was a productive and informative first start. This effort should continue.

Participants

Facilitator

Chief Ron Coleman, California State Fire Marshal (retired)

USDA Forest Service

Janet Anderson-Tyler, Assistant Director
Fire and Aviation Management

USDI National Park Service

Donald Boucher
Fire & Emergency Management Program Manager
National Capital Region

Western Governors Association

Kirk Rowdabaugh, Deputy State Forester, State of Arizona
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John McGee, Office of Governor Kempthorne, Idaho

USDI Bureau of Land Management

Roy A. Johnson, Chief, Fuels Management

U.S. Fire Administration

Hugh E. Wood, Chief, Response Branch

Public Entity Risk Institute

Gerard Hoetmer, Executive Director

Society of American Foresters

Dave Smith, President
Michael T. Goergen, Senior Director, Policy and Programs

Bureau of Indian Affairs

Jim Stires, Chief of Fire Management

National Association of State Foresters

Anne Heissenbuttel, Executive Director

International Association of Fire Chiefs

Gary Smith, Fire Chief, Aptos/La Selva California
Thomas Kuntz, Fire Chief, Red Lodge, Montana

International Association of Wildland Fire

Bruce Suenram, President
Ed Waggoner, Vice President