

RESOURCE NOTES

NO. 8

DATE 07/07/99

Joint Fire Science Program

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Background

The Joint Fire Science Program (Program) was established by the Congress in the FY 1998 Appropriation for Interior and Related Agencies. Additional direction was provided by report number H.R. 105-163, including four wildland fuels-related principal purposes. The overall purpose of the program is to obtain fire and fuels information and tools to help managers and specialists make sound wildland fuels management decisions.

The Program is a partnership of six agencies (U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and U.S. Geological Survey from the Department of the Interior). The Program has three formal management groups: (1) the Governing Board, which issues Requests for Proposals (RFPs), selects and awards projects, etc., is an appointed, 10-member Board repre-

senting the partner agencies; (2) a Program office, which manages day-to-day activities; and (3) a Stakeholder Advisory Group consisting of 15 Federal and 15 non-Federal representatives. The Stakeholder Group is currently being chartered under the Federal Advisory Committee Act by the Secretaries of Agriculture and the Interior. The Group's purpose will be to provide science project and priority recommendations to the Secretaries via the Governing Board.

Discussion

The Program is funded by redirecting base fire management funds of the land management partners at \$8 million annually, with half of the funding each in the USDA Forest Service and the Department of the Interior. RFPs are issued periodically, soliciting proposals which

address science issues raised by the Congress, agency partners, Governing Board, Stakeholder Advisory Group, or other sources. The partnership acts collectively and seeks competitive projects that are transparent with respect to agency jurisdiction, fuel type, or geographic area. To date, two RFPs have been issued — June 1998 and February 1999. Twenty-seven projects were awarded in 1998, and 16 additional projects have been awarded in 1999. To ensure that deliverables are useful to managers and specialists, applied technology transfer is essential for each project. Also, digital copy of all deliverables is required for future posting on a suitable website.

The first project completed was the Joint Fire Science Conference and Workshop held during June 15-17, 1999. The purpose of the workshop was to evaluate the state-of-knowledge in the remote sensing and GIS fields and provide recommendations for future science projects involving the remote sensing of ecosystem health, fuels loadings, and condition, etc. Conference proceedings are expected by January 2000. The second project, nearing completion, is a set of national maps identifying ecosystems and wildland-



urban interface areas at risk from catastrophic fire; these were requested by the Congress and will be available by fall 1999. The third project, expected by January 2000, is a complete update and re-issue of the "Rainbow Series" — a series of fire effects publications, originally issued in the mid-1970s, that are out-of-print and out-of-date. Both hard and digital versions will be available.

Conclusion

The interagency Program, on a wildland fuels basis rather than agency by agency basis, is obtaining science project deliverables expected to be

useful to local managers and specialists, regardless of jurisdiction or affiliation. The focus, as directed by the Congress, is on wildland fuels. Technology transfer is a cornerstone of each project. Project deliverables are currently coming on line.

Contact

The Program Office is located at the National Interagency Fire Center in Boise, ID. The Program Manager is Bob Clark; he can be contacted on (208) 387-5349 or via e-mail at bob_clark@blm.gov. The Program also maintains a website at

http://www.nifc.gov/joint_fire_sci/index.html. The website includes the Joint Fire Science Plan as submitted to the Congress, RFPs, lists of projects, links, and other information.



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