From:	Bogard, Lauren
To:	Schneider, Janice
Cc:	Kristen (Kris) Sarri; Kimberly Thorsen; Douglas, James; Michael Bean; Noreen Walsh; Sarah Greenberger; James Lyons; Steven Ellis; Ronald Dunton; Dan Ashe; Kornze, Neil; Suzette Kimball; Anne Kinsinger; Kevin Washburn; Jennifer Gimbel; Hilary Tompkins; Jonathan Jarvis; Kevin Haugrud; Fay Iudicello; Hazel Wilson; Michael Connor; Elizabeth Klein; Tommy Beaudreau; John Blair; Blake Androff; Kurt Wiedenmann
Subject:	Re: Draft SO re rangeland fire
Date:	Friday, December 05, 2014 10:30:53 AM
Attachments:	SO Rangeland Fire 12-5-14 OES JMS - CLEAN.doc

Good afternoon,

Attached for your review and comment is a revised draft of the proposed S.O. on rangeland fire. We've tried to shorten the document and use as much space for substance as possible (rather than process).

Please review the draft S.O. and send comments in redline ON THIS VERSION (Please do not create new versions) by **3 pm on Monday, Dec. 8.**

Thank you for the comments you have shared to date. We look forward to continuing to work with all of you on this. Please continue to keep this close hold.

Thanks, everyone. Have a great weekend!

Lauren Bogard
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On Sun, Nov 30, 2014 at 2:33 PM, Schneider, Janice <janice_schneider@ios.doi.gov> wrote:

> Attached for your review and comment is a first draft of a proposed rangeland fire Secretarial Order. This concept is under consideration for potential announcement at next Saturday's WGA meeting, and we will be having additional internal discussion this coming week. I look forward to working with you on this and getting your input. Please keep this close hold. Thx, Janice
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> --
> Janice M. Schneider
> Assistant Secretary
> Land and Minerals Management
> US Department of the Interior
> 1849 C Street, NW
> Washington, DC 20240
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ORDER NO.

Subject: Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management and Restoration

Sec. 1 **Purpose**. This Order sets forth enhanced policies and strategies for preventing and suppressing rangeland fire and for restoring sagebrush landscapes impacted by fire across the West. These actions are essential for conserving habitat for the Greater sage-grouse and other wildlife species associated with the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem in the Great Basin region. This effort will build upon the experience and success of addressing rangeland fire, and broader wildland fire prevention, suppression and restoration efforts to date, including the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, and be coordinated with local, state, tribal, and regional efforts to address the threat of rangeland fire at a landscape level.

Sec. 2 **Background**. The Department of the Interior is entrusted with overseeing the management of Federal public lands for the benefit of current and future generations, as well as the protection and recovery of imperiled species of flora and fauna and the ecosystems upon which they depend. Rangeland fires in the Great Basin of the Western United States have increased in size and intensity in recent years. The accelerated invasion of non-native grasses, in particular cheatgrass, and the spread of pinyon-juniper across the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem, along with drought and the effects of climate change, have contributed substantially to the increased threat of rangeland fires to the sagebrush landscape and the more than 350 species of plants and animals that rely on this critically important ecosystem. The increasing frequency and intensity of rangeland fire also poses a significant threat to ranchers, livestock managers, sportsmen and outdoor recreation enthusiasts that use the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem, and puts at risk their associated economic contributions across this landscape that support and maintain the American way of life in the West.

In 2010, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (USFWS) found that the loss of habitat from fire in the Great Basin is a significant threat to the Greater sage-grouse in that portion of its remaining range. The USFWS is now considering whether protections under the Endangered Species Act are warranted. Targeted action to reduce the likelihood and severity of fire, to stem the spread of invasive species, and to restore the health and resilience of the landscape is necessary to preserve, protect, and restore Greater sage-grouse habitat in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem, and address important public safety, economic, cultural and social concerns.

Sec. 3 **Authorities**. This Order is issued under the authority of Section 2 of Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1950 (64 Stat.1262), as amended. Other statutory authorities for this Order include and are not limited to the following:

a. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), 42 U.S.C. 4321 *et seq.*

b. The Endangered Species Act (ESA), 16 U.S.C. 1531 *et seq.*

c. The National Wildlife Refuge System Administration Act, 16 U.S.C. 668dd *et seq.*

d. The Migratory Bird Conservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 715 *et seq.*

e. The National Fish and Wildlife Foundation Establishment Act, 16 U.S.C. 3701 *et seq.*

f. The Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, 16 U.S.C. 661 *et seq.*

g. National Historic Preservation Act, 16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*, and

h. The Federal Land and Policy Management Act (FLPMA), 43 U.S.C. 1701 *et seq.*

i. [FLAME Act?] The Federal Land Assistance Management and Enhancement Act of 2009, Title V of Division A of P.L. 111-88

Sec. 4 **Policy.** Protecting, conserving, and restoring Greater sage-grouse habitat and the sagebrush ecosystem, while maintaining safe and efficient operations, is a critical fire management priority for the Department. Allocation of fire management resources and assets before, during, and after wildland fire incidents will reflect this priority.

Comment [SJM1]: My understanding is that this language is intended to preserve firefighter and public safety as the #1 priority.

Sec. 5 **Developing an Enhanced Fire Prevention, Suppression, and Restoration Strategy.** To accomplish protection, conservation, and restoration of Greater sage-grouse habitat the Department will:

a. Work cooperatively and collaboratively at all levels with other federal agencies, states, tribes, local entities, and non-governmental organizations on fire management and habitat restoration activities, including: (i) Enhancing the capability and capacity of state, tribal, and local government, as well as non-governmental, fire management organizations, including rangeland fire protection associations and volunteer fire departments, through improved and expanded education and training, and ; (ii) Improving coordination among all partners involved in rangeland fire management to further improve safety and effectiveness.

b. Utilize risk-based, landscape-scale approaches to identify and facilitate investments in fuels treatments, fire suppression capabilities, and post-fire stabilization, rehabilitation, and restoration in the Great Basin.

c. Reduce the likelihood, size, and severity of rangeland fires by seeking to stop the spread of cheat grass and other invasive, non-native species.

d. Commit wildland fire management resources and assets to prepare for and respond to rangeland fires.

e. Improve and enhance the development and utilization of technologies for fire prediction and prevention and the identification of areas of high ecological and habitat value.

f. Apply science and research to improve the identification and protection of resistant

and resilient sagebrush landscapes and the development of biocontrols and other tools for cheatgrass control to improve capability for long term restoration of sage-steppe ecosystems.

g. Utilize seeds and plant materials appropriate to the location, conditions, and management objectives for vegetation management and restoration activities, including strategic sourcing for acquiring, storing, and utilizing seeds and other plant materials native to the sage brush ecosystem where possible.

h. Encourage efforts to expedite processes, streamline procedures, and promote innovations that can improve overall rangeland fire prevention, suppression and restoration efficiency and effectiveness; and

i. Explore opportunities to pilot new strategies to reduce the threat of rangeland fire to sagebrush steppe and Greater sage-grouse conservation, including expanded use of veteran fire crews and youth conservation teams, and efforts to further public-private partnerships to expand capacity for improved fire management.

Sec. 6 **Rangeland Fire Task Force**. A Rangeland Task Force (Task Force) is hereby established and is chaired by the Deputy Secretary. Members of the Task Force include the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, the Assistant Secretary for Land and Minerals Management, the Assistant Secretary for Fish and Wildlife and Parks; the Assistant Secretary for Water and Science, and the Assistant Secretary for Indian Affairs. The Task Force will do the following:

a. Develop a science-based strategy to reduce the threat of large-scale rangeland fire to habitat for the Greater sage-grouse and the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem through effective rangeland management, fire prevention, fire suppression, and post-fire restoration efforts at a landscape scale.

b. Conduct a comprehensive review of the existing programs, policies, and practices associated with current efforts to prevent, suppress, and restore rangeland fire-impacted sagebrush steppe including the outcomes of the recent rangeland fire conference *The Next Steppe: Sage-grouse and Rangeland Fire in the Great Basin*, and utilize the collective experience of the conference participants and the expertise of the practitioners and senior policy groups in this effort.

c. Seek input from the ~~-~~Bureau Fire Directors~~National Interagency Fire Center~~, the US Forest Service and the Natural Resources Conservation Service in the Department of Agriculture, and the various state wildland fire agencies and programs; the offices of the governors in the states most threatened by rangeland fire, including California, Oregon, Nevada, Utah, and Idaho as well as the Western Governors' Association; affected American Indian tribes; scientists; and local, community-based fire organizations such as the rural fire protection associations, weed collaboratives, native seed production organizations, soil and water conservation districts, and various stakeholder groups with interest and expertise in rangeland fire prevention, suppression, and rangeland restoration.

Sec. 7 **Implementation Plan, Deliverables and Report**.

a. Within 30 days of the effective date of this Order, the Task Force will provide a detailed plan, including timelines, for implementing this Order.

b. The Task Force will also provide to the Secretary two reports that outline a set of actions that can be accomplished prior to the onset of the 2015 Western fire season, actions that can be accomplished prior to the onset of the 2016 Western fire season, and actions that will require a longer period. At a minimum, these actions are to include: (i) Design and implementation of comprehensive, integrated fire response plans for the principal areas of the Great Basin subject to fire and invasive species; (ii) Clear direction on the prioritization and allocation of fire management resources and assets; (iii) Expand focus on fuels reduction opportunities and implementation; (iv) Fully integrate emerging science of ecological resilience into design of habitat management, fuels management, and restoration projects; (v) Review and update of emergency stabilization and burned area rehabilitation policies and programs to integrate with long-term restoration activities; (vi) Multi-year investments in restoration of sage-steppe ecosystems, including consistent long-term monitoring protocols and adaptive management for restored areas; (vii) Large-scale experimental activities to remove cheatgrass and other invasive annual grasses through various tools; (viii) Multi-year investments in science and research; and (ix) A comprehensive strategy for acquisition, storage, and distribution of seeds and other plant materials.

c. No later than March 1, 2015, the Task Force will present its initial report on actions and activities that will be implemented prior to the 2015 western fire season. Individual bureaus are encouraged to also take immediate action to implement improvements within their respective areas of responsibility before the initial report is issued.

d. No later than May 1, 2015, the Task Force will present its final report on activities that will be implemented prior to the 2016 fire season, and longer term actions and activities to implement the policy and strategy set forth in this Secretarial Order, including to ensure continued implementation of approved actions and activities associated with the strategy.

Sec. 8 **Implementation**. The Deputy Secretary is responsible for implementing all aspects of this Order. This responsibility may be delegated as appropriate. This Order does not alter or affect any existing duty or authority of individual Assistant Secretaries or bureaus.

Sec. 9 **Effect of the Order.** This Order is intended to improve the internal management of the Department. This Order and any resulting report or recommendations are not intended to, and do not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person. To the extent there is any inconsistency between the provisions of this Order and any Federal laws or regulations, the laws or regulations will control.

Sec. 10 **Expiration Date**. This Order is effective immediately and will remain in effect until it is amended, superseded, or revoked, whichever occurs first.