



Joe Freeland
Co-chair
Regional Cohesive Strategy Working Group
Western Governors' Association
1387 S. Vinnell Way
Boise, ID 83709

Dear Mr. Freeland,

The undersigned organizations, who are also members of the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC), are pleased to see that the National Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy recognizes that differing regional environmental and socio-economic conditions must necessarily be taken into account when determining how best to achieve the Strategy's overarching vision of being able to:

Safely and effectively extinguish fire, when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a Nation, live with wildland fire.

The nature of wildfire in the West is unique, and the development patterns of the west are equally unique due to the large proportion of the landscape in federal management (National Forests and BLM).

Given those circumstances, we recommend that the implementation strategy for the western region prioritize these actions and activities:

1. Facilitate landscape-scale forest and grassland restoration.

Landscapes which can accommodate natural fire are also more resilient to man-made fire. Fires on these restored landscapes are easier and cheaper to control. Communities on these landscapes are more easily protected from wildfire.

2. Expand and continue development and use of Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) for all lands fire management and suppression planning.

In the west, CWPPs have provided social support for forest restoration and fuels reduction activities in both the wildland urban interface (WUI) and for the adjacent "middle lands" between the backcountry and the communities. The all lands, all agencies, approach to CWPPs has proven invaluable.

3. Expand the concept of "fire-adapted communities" to include an "in-place" workforce and private sector infrastructure to live with fire, manage it, use it, control it, and do the land management activities to help the forest adapt to it.

Having this trained and skilled fire and forest stewardship capacity means communities will be quick to mobilize in fire events and quick to be able to take advantage of prescribed fire opportunities. It will also create social acceptance for "good" fire on the landscape.

4. Continue and increase the collaboration among local, state, and federal stakeholders in fire planning, suppression planning, and fire management.

Social agreement around fire and forests in the west has been growing for the past 10 years. The collaborative development of the National Fire Plan and the collaborative nature of the CWPP process have greatly contributed to the ability to achieve that social agreement. The official position that CWPPs are necessary for funding for fuels reduction treatments in the WUI -- that the federal agency, state agencies, and local government as well as fire departments must participate and sign-off on plans -- has given this process a gravity and respect which encourages sincere discussion and consensus building.

The organizations signed on to this letter are members of the Rural Voices for Conservation Coalition (RVCC). RVCC is a coalition committed to finding solutions to economic and ecological problems facing the rural West. It is a diverse coalition involving businesses, local nonprofits, elected officials, and rural citizens who care about the health of the land and economic well-being of their communities. www.sustainablenorthwest.org/rvcc.

Please feel free to contact Lynn Jungwirth, Senior Fellow for Policy and Development, The Watershed Research and Training Center (lynnj@hayfork.net, 530-628-4206) or Carol Daly, Flathead Economic Policy Center (cdaly1@centurytel.net, 406-892-8155) if you have any questions or would like further clarification or comment.

Sincerely,



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