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Route To:

Subject: Fire and Aviation Management, New Director Mission Statement

To: Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Area Director, IITF Director, and WO Staff

It is a time of great opportunity for fire and aviation management within the Forest Service. During my first three months as your Director of Fire and Aviation Management (FAM), I have had the opportunity to listen. I have listened to the Secretary of Agriculture, our Under Secretary, our Chief and Deputy Chiefs, Regional Foresters, State Foresters, and hundreds of dedicated fire and aviation employees from across our nation. We face several major issues, but those issues bring opportunities. Many of you ask my perspective on these opportunities. It is time for me to share my vision of our fire and aviation management future.

I firmly believe fire and aviation management is deeply imbedded in the Forest Service mission. The scope of our work, the land we manage, and the people we influence, is inspiring. Land and people are the source of our challenge and triumph. Improving the vegetative condition of our national forests is our priority land management objective. As we restore fire-adapted landscapes, we benefit the land, the public, and our own safety. Improving our culture and performance is our priority FAM organizational objective.

We are experts. We know the science and the art of our craft. We know how to use fire and how to suppress it. While we can effectively manage an incredible range of incidents, we are, primarily, skilled experts within a land management agency. We share responsibility with our interagency partners and a variety of agency employees including foresters, range conservationists, wildlife biologists, hydrologists, landscape architects, archeologists, and business management professionals (to name a few). Recognition of our skills arises from the way we perform, our expertise, and the way we treat people.

Our expertise needs continual honing. I am convinced people make positive change and are the key to our future. Building on our agency vegetative objectives, holding fast to a core foundation of safety, integrity, and mutual respect, we, as fire and aviation management leaders, must now focus on three important characteristics: "Innovation," "Discipline," and "Execution."

Take the time to read the enclosure to this letter which describes these three focus areas.

I am convinced we have the ability and determination to build a new and stronger foundation for the future. Our vegetative foundation will be built on healthier, less volatile forests. Our conduct as experts will reflect a greater understanding of fundamentals. Our results as leaders will engender confidence.



I believe focused individuals, gathered for altruistic purposes, do great things. We are about to reform our culture and our skills to meet our mission in a much changed environment. This reform will bring significant change. Our training, operating manner, and discipline, and our quality assurance methodologies need to change. With change comes discomfort, impatience, and confusion. The future viability of our organization will be determined by our efforts. I have no doubt we will succeed.

We begin this journey together. I will be your Director for many years. I am proud to count you as friends and humbled to have been given the opportunity to fill a leadership role with you during these important times. Together we will make good things happen.

/s/ T.C. Harbour
TOM HARBOUR
Director, Fire and Aviation Management



Innovation, Discipline, and Execution

Innovation: We will respect and value thinking minds, voices, and thoughts of those that challenge the status quo while focusing on the greater good. I hold the history and legacy of the Forest Service close to my heart, yet I know history is a continuum of change brought about by creative thinking and those willing to take risk to improve the agency's ability to meet its mission. Our bright future requires a nimble approach to designing effective solutions. Innovative thinking drives nimble solutions.

As one example of one of these nimble solutions, we are moving forward to define our fire suppression doctrine. This effort is a partnership with the Regional Foresters, Forest Supervisors, and District Rangers. We are currently on an exciting path to explore alternatives to the conventional view of policy and direction. We will identify and illuminate the operating principles that guide our efforts and decisions in fire suppression. We will create performance expectations that focus on initiative, precise decision-making, and well-honed judgment. We will implement a quality assurance program to ensure judgment, decisions, and behaviors are consistent with the clearly expressed intentions of our leaders and the operational doctrine we establish. We will modify our training emphases to improve performance in these areas.

Once we have gained experience using this model, my intent is to apply it to every fire and aviation management task. This important work will take both focused and sustained effort.

Discipline: The development and exercise of discipline is essential to greatness. Fiscal, managerial, and operational discipline are at the core of our ability to maintain our solvency and contribute to the Forest Service mission.

Through collective attention to program planning and budgeting, FAM will demonstrate our pursuit of economic and programmatic efficiencies throughout every area. Our planning will be realistic and precise, utilizing the best technology available to accomplish the mission. We will explore and illuminate trade-offs required to address near- and long-term budget and program challenges. We will be efficient. What we do, we will do well.

Management behaviors in all FAM areas will demonstrate a positive, focused, responsible, and purposeful manner. We must effectively deal with both tactical and strategic objectives.

Effective command and control relies on the expression of clear intent, confidence in capabilities, acceptance of mutual responsibilities, a specified objective, and freedom to act, all firmly rooted in shared doctrinal principles. That foundation provides fertile ground in which personal and organizational discipline are nourished and grown. Program managers, under line direction, must develop and ensure these behaviors are the organizational standard, as they serve as the identity of the unit. Program managers are responsible to ensure these behaviors serve as the basis of performance and program evaluation.

Execution: We will do what we say we will do. Achieving program objectives, improving diversity, and accomplishing targets are essential to maintaining our credibility with Congress, the public, our cooperators, and within our own agency. We will be more efficient and effective.

My commitment is for every firefighter and fireline leader, every aviator and aviation leader, every prescribed fire manager and fire use leader, to have the tools necessary to perform the job expected of them. We will not confuse the ability to have the proper tools for our jobs with an unrealistic expectation of unlimited budgets. We will speak the truth to our line leaders about our ability to execute their expectations.

Freedom to act, to execute, requires a disciplined approach to the work, no shortcuts, and no actions outside established operating principles. The mechanism that makes this model work is managers' confidence in the demonstrated capabilities of employees. Firefighters, fire managers, prescribed fire leaders, and aviation personnel at all levels have the responsibility to act in conformance with leader intent and operational doctrine. FAM will be agency leaders in holding ourselves accountable for positive change.