

**Idaho to Chair, Arizonan to serve on new national panel  
exploring wildfire suppression costs**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 29, 2004

Contact: Paul Orbuch (303) 623-9378

DENVER - Idaho Gov. Dirk Kempthorne and Arizona Gov. Janet Napolitano today named the Western state representatives to a national, blue ribbon panel that will review the costs of fighting wildland fires and determine what steps could be taken to contain those costs.

Kempthorne and Napolitano are the Western Governors' Association's leads for wildland fire management issues, and Kempthorne serves on the national Wildland Fire Leadership Council. Jim Caswell, Director of the Idaho Governors' Office of Species Conservation, will chair the council's newly created Strategic Issues Panel on Fire Suppression Costs. Arizona State Forester, Kirk Rowdabaugh, will represent Gov. Napolitano and the National Association of State Foresters.

"Idaho is very pleased to be chairing this national panel on fire suppression costs," Kempthorne said. "We will explore the relationship of large fires to land management plans and practices and whether new strategies would improve forest health and contain fire suppression costs."

Governor Napolitano said, "It is key that we not shift costs to the states, tribes or local governments. This panel will develop new recommendations and guide implementation of existing ones, including those identified in the Governors' 10-year strategy for reducing the risks of catastrophic fires."

P. Lynn Scarlett, Assistant Secretary of the Interior for Policy, Management and Budget, chairs the Wildland Fire Leadership Council. It is a cooperative, interagency organization dedicated to coordinating and implementing the goals, actions and policies in the National Fire Plan and the Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy among the federal, state, tribal and county agencies responsible for wildland fire management.

In October 2003, Assistant Secretary Scarlett announced that the blue ribbon panel would be created to examine how to contain the costs of large fires while protecting people and resources, particularly in "wildland urban interface areas."

"We will look forward to getting advice on what measures should be implemented from the Idaho and Arizona experts as well as other panel representatives from state, local, federal and tribal governments," Scarlett said.

The panel is expected to begin meeting in February and to issue recommendations in late spring. The report, at a minimum, will include findings, specific actions and recommendations on:

- The barriers and obstacles to cost containment,
- The strategies for cost containment success,
- The impediments to equitable sharing of suppression and cost apportionment among all jurisdictions,
- The criteria to measure cost containment success, and
- The relationship of fire management plans and resource management plans to suppression costs.

The panel will take a collaborative approach in seeking information from a broad range of stakeholders and in developing its findings and recommendations.

The Council includes representatives from WGA, state foresters, the U.S. Departments of Interior and Agriculture, Federal Emergency Management Agency, National Association of Counties, Intertribal Timber Council and the International Association of Fire Chiefs. Additional information on the council can be found on the Web at [www.fireplan.gov](http://www.fireplan.gov).

The Western Governors' Association is an independent, nonprofit organization representing the governors of 18 states and three U.S.-flag islands in the Pacific. Through their Association, the governors identify and address key policy and governance issues in natural resources, the environment, human services, economic development, international relations and public management. Information about WGA is available on the Web at [www.westgov.org](http://www.westgov.org).