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Secretaries of Agriculture, Interior and Homeland Security Announce Partnership to Develop Comprehensive Wildfire Management Strategy

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Washington, D.C.— Secretary of Agriculture Tom Vilsack, Secretary of the Interior Ken Salazar, and Secretary of Homeland Security Janet Napolitano today announced the formation of a federal partnership with state, regional, local and tribal leaders to develop a strategy to more effectively address America's wildland fire challenges.

At a meeting of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council in Washington, D.C., local officials joined governors, representatives of tribal governments and the departments of Agriculture, Interior, and Homeland Security to establish a blueprint for a "Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy."

"The Council provides the right framework for a strong national strategy to address the growing threats of wildfire," said Secretary Salazar. "The Council's partnerships are key to the establishment of a national, intergovernmental wildfire policy that will ensure the safety of our firefighters and the citizens they protect as we confront longer and more intense fire seasons in more regions of the country."

"There are no easy solutions to the challenges of wildland fire," said Secretary Vilsack. "But a cohesive wildfire management strategy will provide the best blueprint to ensure community safety and the restoration of ecosystems that will, in the long run, benefit all Americans, especially those who live in rural areas."

"Developing a comprehensive national strategy to prepare for and protect against wildfires that threaten the safety of Americans is an important part of our efforts to build a culture of resiliency in communities across the country," said Secretary Napolitano.

At the Council meeting, federal, state, local and tribal government representatives agreed to develop a comprehensive landscape-scale analysis of all wildlands, based on the best available science, and a strategic blueprint of policy and program alternatives for the wildland fire community. The strategy will analyze three key components: landscape restoration, fire-adapted communities, and response to wildfire.

The Cohesive Wildfire Management Strategy will address America's increasing wildland fire challenges. Currently, millions of acres of public lands across the country are at risk of large wildfires due to overcrowded stands of trees, insect infestations, and invasions of non-native species. The group targets the completion of the strategy by this fall.

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council, re-established by a Memorandum of Understanding signed by Secretary Salazar, Secretary Vilsack and Secretary Napolitano on April 12 consists of federal, state, tribal, county and municipal government officials dedicated to the consistent implementation of wildland fire policies, goals and management activities.

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