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Route To:

Subject: Aviation Feasibility Study Next Steps

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

I have reviewed the recommendations of the *Feasibility of Conducting a Competitive Sourcing Competition on Aviation Activities in the US Forest Service*, and I accept the team's recommendations. In general, the team has recommended initial actions to reorganize and improve some of the functions that were studied and determine within the coming months whether to proceed with one or more competitive sourcing competitions under OMB Circular A-76 rules.

Enclosure 1 is a summary of key decisions relating to actions in the next several months. It will be posted at www.fs.fed.us/fire/. The feasibility study report contains competition-sensitive information and will not be distributed at this time.

Work will begin immediately on initial actions which are expected to take no longer than six months to complete. This work includes business case analyses, some minor realignment and an update to the Aerial Delivered Firefighter Study to address organizational issues noted in the report. These short-term efforts will be crucial to future decision making. Once this work is completed, I will review the results of this initial work and the remaining Feasibility Study recommendations and make a determination whether to proceed with competitive sourcing competitions.

Completing the recommended items will be a challenging task. Tom Harbour, the Director of Fire and Aviation Management, has asked Larry Brosnan, Assistant Director, Aviation, to lead the efforts associated with the implementation of the feasibility report. While Larry is leading these efforts, Karyn Wood, Assistant Director, Operations, will assume the leadership role for aviation operations and supervision of the aviation staff assigned to Boise.

This is important work and I expect that you will make as many of your people as needed available to these efforts. Please contact Tom Harbour or Larry Brosnan with the names of experienced management officials to oversee and implement the various feasibility study recommendations and the Interagency study efforts.

Implementing these recommendations for aviation activities will not impede the Forest Service's ability to safely respond to fire emergencies and complete needed land management projects.



I appreciate the recommendations that the study group has made and look forward to strengthening our aviation program. We must develop a flexible and efficient organization to meet our mission safely and effectively.

/s/ Hank Kashdan, for
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Chief

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Enclosure

Enclosure 1– Summary of Feasibility Report Recommendations

The Aviation Feasibility Study looked at the entire spectrum of aviation activities in support of fire management and natural resource programs, the workforce, Full Time Equivalents (FTE) accomplishing the work in addition to the mix, type and condition of agency-owned and contracted aircraft, equipment and facilities. This feasibility study assesses the best way to increase the cost-effectiveness and organizational efficiency of the Fire and Aviation Management Program.

The Feasibility Study Team arranged all the aviation activities into six business areas.

Each of the Aviation Business Areas was analyzed and recommendations developed based upon the issues identified and cost analyses within the Business Areas.

- A. Aerial Delivery of Firefighters and Support
- B. Aerial Detection and Command and Control
- C. Aerial Fire Suppression – Airtanker and Large Helicopter
- D. Aerial Resource Support (Natural Resources / Fuel Management Mission)
- E. Aviation Contract Management and Quality Assurance
- F. Aviation Program Management

Key Decisions:

1. Helitack Crews and Smokejumpers are excluded from further consideration under the Aviation Feasibility Study and will instead be included as part of FY09 Firefighting Feasibility Study.
2. Update the Aerial Delivered Firefighter Study (ADFF) to evaluate and recommend the optimal mix of helicopter and fixed wing delivered firefighters. The study will include an analysis of the location of bases and facilities for staging aircraft and crews based upon improved aircraft capabilities.
3. Study Management Functions and Program Administration to create a centralized aviation management structure through realignment of supervisory functions, quality assurance functions and program administration to improve coordination, scheduling and operational efficiency across regional boundaries.
4. Initiate an Aviation Business Case Analysis (ABCA) to determine the appropriate number and mix of large airtankers, helitankers, aerial supervision and helicopters for long-term Agency use. The Business Case Analysis will evaluate the cost effectiveness of owning versus leasing aircraft to be used in support of Agency missions as identified throughout each Business Areas.
5. Study the current smokejumper aircraft fleet, incorporating updated ADFF and Business case analysis to develop a strategic plan and replacement strategy for aging aircraft.

6. Conduct value analysis of retardant options, full service or bulk, liquid or powder, to determine the best method of contracting retardant and services.
7. Based on the Business Case Analysis, ADFP and the Wildland Fire Management Aerial Application Study, determine the number, capacity, and location of airtanker bases.
8. Initiate actions to consolidate helicopter rappel training in order to promote standardization and efficiency.
9. Initiate actions to establish a National Aerial Supervision Academy for standardization of command and control aviation resources, consolidating training for leadplane pilots and Air Tactical Group Supervisors (ATGS) for Aerial Supervision Module (ASM) program development.
10. Contract for multiple ASM and ATGS platforms utilizing a single national contract similar to the national helicopter contract for standardization and cost efficiencies.
11. Validate the efficacy of the Infrared (IR) Program and evaluate the adequacy of the technology being used to assist decision makers.
12. Evaluate the expansion of the Firewatch helicopter program for use in other Agency programs, such as law enforcement and natural resource missions. Consider sharing Firewatch resources among Regions and the interagency community for large fire support.
13. Complete the research on the feasibility of utilizing Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UASs) for data collection.

Further Considerations:

Recommendations for Long term improvements, Business Process Reengineering (BPR) and Preliminary Planning for potential A-76 Competitive Sourcing Studies were also included in the report. After all necessary pre-work is completed, decisions will be made as to whether to move forward with any recommendations that may result in:

- Centralizing some aviation management and program administration, with the possibility of consolidating locations and facilities.
- Reducing bases to better align agency facilities and assets of aerial firefighting for efficient use of aviation resources.
- Examining any efficiency that could be gained through agency or contracted services.