



**OFFICE OF
INSPECTOR GENERAL**
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

JAN 26 2017

Memorandum

To: Amy Holley
Acting Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget

From: Nicole Miller *Nicole Miller*
Eastern Regional Manager for Audits, Inspections, and Evaluations

Subject: Verification Review – Recommendations for the Report, “Wildland Urban Interface: Community Assistance” (ER-EV-MOA-0012-2009)
Report No. 2017-ER-010

The Office of Inspector General (OIG) has completed a verification review of the four recommendations presented in the subject evaluation report. Our objective was to determine whether the U.S. Department of the Interior’s (DOI) Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) implemented the recommendations as reported to the Office of Financial Management (PFM), Office of Policy, Management and Budget. PFM told us that it has closed the four recommendations, and we concur that all of the recommendations have been resolved and implemented.

Background

Our report, “Wildland Urban Interface: Community Assistance,” issued July 30, 2010, made four recommendations to improve visibility, accountability, and communication within DOI wildland fire management programs.

In an August 19, 2010 memorandum, OWF concurred with the report’s recommendations and outlined steps to implement them. In an October 5, 2010 memorandum, we referred the recommendations to the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget to track their implementation.

Scope and Methodology

The scope of this review was limited to determining whether OWF implemented the recommendations we reported. To accomplish our objective, we reviewed official correspondence and supporting documentation received from OWF. We did not perform internal control testing, make site visits, or conduct fieldwork to determine whether OWF corrected the underlying deficiencies that we initially identified. As a result, we did not conduct this review in accordance with the Generally Accepted Government Auditing Standards issued by the Comptroller General of the United States or the Quality Standards for Inspection and Evaluation issued by the Council of the Inspectors General on Integrity and Efficiency.

Results of Review

We found that OWF implemented the four recommendations that were detailed in the PFM closure memorandum.

Recommendation 1: Assign program ownership for wildland urban interface (WUI) community assistance grants and projects at departmental and national bureau level.

Actions Taken: The Office of Wildland Fire Council (OWFC) designated the OWF Fuels and Landscapes Program Lead to oversee, direct, and coordinate DOI-wide community assistance regarding wildland fires: prevention, firefighting, and wildfire aftermath, as well as educating those affected by wildfire. OWFC also requested that DOI's four wildfire fighting agencies—the Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and Bureau of Indian Affairs—assign a position at the bureau level that will fulfill the community assistance function. Based on our review, we determined that the requirements for Recommendation 1 are being met, and we consider this recommendation resolved and implemented.

Recommendation 2: Strengthen the interagency National Fire Plan Operations and Reporting System (NFPORS) WUI community assistance module, including issuance of comprehensive guidelines for users, defined project activity elements, and performance monitoring and tracking tools.

Actions Taken: OWF oversees community assistance activities with guidance and coordination from community assistance coordinators. It has strengthened the interagency NFPORS WUI community assistance module by issuing guidance—OWF Policy Memorandum 2015-008, “Wildland Fire Management (WFM) – Community Assistance,” dated August 24, 2015—that defined the range of community assistance activities and established community reporting requirements. OWF also collaborates with other bureaus and neighboring communities to monitor and track the performance of those activities, and has collected 2 years of data to help evaluate community assistance activity trends. For budget purposes and in support of DOI's Strategic Plan, OWF compiles annual metrics and related trends in wildland fire management activities linked with wildfire occurrence and its impacts. The data help DOI evaluate wildfire risk to life, property, and resources. Based on our review, we determined that the requirements for Recommendation 2 are being met, and we consider this recommendation resolved and implemented.

Recommendation 3: Establish consistent WUI community assistance grant policies and guidance addressing program objectives and performance measures.

Actions Taken: The DOI Wildland Fire Management (WFM) program manages community assistance activities in accordance with OWF Policy Memorandum 2015-008. The memorandum requires WFM to align its objectives to support the performance measures and goals contained in the “National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management

Strategy” and the “DOI Annual Performance Plan and Report.” To assist in this process, OWF is providing training courses and advanced management programs to create and sustain fire-adapted communities located within WUIs.

We note that the community assistance program is not a grant program; rather, it uses cooperative agreements, memoranda of understanding, or contracts that are subject to 505 Departmental Manual 2. None of the community assistance work is being accomplished with grants.

Based on our review, we determined that the requirements for Recommendation 3 are being met, and we consider this recommendation resolved and implemented.

Recommendation 4: Establish a national methodology for sharing educational and outreach products developed through WUI community assistance grants.

Actions Taken: As detailed in Recommendation 3 “Actions Taken,” community assistance is not a grant program. WUI has created resource tools for sharing educational and outreach products and information related to community assistance. Specifically, bureaus post a wide variety of community assistance materials and success stories on www.forestsandrangelands.gov. This website is a collaborative effort between DOI and the U.S. Department of Agriculture and provides fire, fuels, and land management information for Government officials, land and wildland fire management professionals, businesses, and communities. The website also hosts the “National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.” In addition, DOI encourages use of the Fire Adapted Communities website (www.fireadapted.org), which contains materials that assist bureaus, States, tribes, and local communities in collaboration efforts.

Based on our review, we determined that the requirements for Recommendation 4 are being met, and we consider this recommendation resolved and implemented.

Conclusion

We informed OWF officials of the results of this review on January 13, 2017. They concurred with our conclusions.

If you have any questions about this report, please contact me at 703-487-8011.

cc: Olivia Ferriter, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget
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