



THE DEPUTY SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

JAN 16 2015

Dear Tribal Leader:

Secretary Jewell recently issued the attached Secretarial Order on Rangeland Fire Prevention, Management and Restoration. Recognizing the important role of tribes on this issue, the Order provides for tribal consultation and for the Department of the Interior (Department) to work cooperatively with Federal, state, and tribal governments to improve protection, conservation, and restoration of greater sage-grouse habitat in the Great Basin region of Idaho, Nevada, Eastern Oregon, and parts of Utah and California. I am writing to invite you or your designee to participate in tribal consultations on this matter in the coming weeks.

Rangeland fires in the Great Basin of the Western United States have increased in size and intensity in recent years. The accelerated invasion of non-native annual grasses, in particular cheatgrass and medusahead rye, and the spread of pinyon-juniper across the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem, along with drought and climate change, have led to an increased threat of rangeland fires to the sagebrush landscape. Preventing and suppressing rangeland fire and restoring sagebrush landscapes impacted by fire across the West is essential for conserving habitat associated with the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem in the Great Basin region, which is home to the greater sage-grouse and approximately 350 other species.

The attached Order provides that protecting, conserving, and restoring the health of the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem in the Great Basin is a critical fire management priority for the Department. The Order also establishes a Rangeland Fire Task Force to work with state, tribal, and local governments to develop strategies to reduce the threat of large-scale rangeland fire to habitat for the greater sage-grouse and the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem. The Task Force will develop an initial report by March 1, 2015, that will outline actions that can be accomplished prior to the 2015 Western fire season. The Task Force will present a final report by May 1, 2015, on activities that can be implemented prior to the 2016 Western fire season and identify additional long-term actions to implement the Order. Additional information and materials are available at www.forestsandrangelands.gov/rangeland/.

I want to assure you that our trust obligations to tribes, their communities, and tribal trust resources are unchanged. We remain committed to maintaining our sacred trust responsibility to tribes, their communities, and tribal trust resources. Public and firefighter safety will also remain the top critical fire management priority for the Department.

We know that tribes may have important strategic suggestions, valuable traditional ecological knowledge, or simply questions or guidance. The Department has scheduled the following tribal listening and consultation sessions:

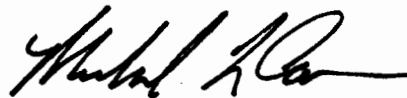
<u>Date</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Location</u>
<u>Listening Session</u>		
Wednesday, Feb. 4, 2015	2:00-5:00 p.m. (EST)	By teleconference 1-888-790-1743 Passcode: 5301205
<u>Consultations</u>		
Thursday, Feb. 19, 2015	9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (PST)	Federal Building East 911 NE 11 th Avenue Portland, Oregon 97232
Tuesday, April 7, 2015	9:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (PST)	Reno-Sparks Tribal Health Center 1715 Kuenzli Street Reno, Nevada 89502

Representatives of the Office of the Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs, Office of the Assistant Secretary – Land and Minerals Management, Office of the Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget (PMB), including the Office of Wildland Fire, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Affairs will be present at the consultations.

Written comments may be submitted to rangelandfire@ios.doi.gov until February 23, 2015, for the March 1 report, and April 21, 2015, for the May report.

Should you have any question regarding the process, please contact Mr. Jerry Gidner, PMB Tribal Liaison Officer, at Jerold_Gidner@ios.doi.gov or (202) 302-9731.

Sincerely,



Michael L. Connor
Deputy Secretary of the Interior

Enclosure