



United States Department of Agriculture

Office of the Secretary
Washington, D.C. 20250

MAY 24 2010

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
131 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Madam Chairman:

Enclosed is the Forest Service comprehensive recruitment and retention plan for firefighters in Region 5, as required on page 1150 of the House Appropriations Committee Print accompanying the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 (H.R. 1105; Public Law 111-8).

A similar letter is being sent to Senator Lamar Alexander, Congressmen James P. Moran and Michael K. Simpson.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tom Vilsack", written in a cursive style.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary

Enclosure



United States Department of Agriculture

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Washington, D.C. 20250

MAY 24 2010

The Honorable James P. Moran
Chairman
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
B-308 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Mr. Chairman:

Enclosed is the Forest Service comprehensive recruitment and retention plan for firefighters in Region 5, as required on page 1150 of the House Appropriations Committee Print accompanying the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 (H.R. 1105; Public Law 111-8).

A similar letter is being sent to Congressman Michael K. Simpson and Senators Dianne Feinstein and Lamar Alexander.

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MAY 24 2010

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
United States Senate
125 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Senator Alexander:

Enclosed is the Forest Service comprehensive recruitment and retention plan for firefighters in Region 5, as required on page 1150 of the House Appropriations Committee Print accompanying the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 (H.R. 1105; Public Law 111-8).

A similar letter is being sent to Congressman James P. Moran and Senators Dianne Feinstein and Lamar Alexander.

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Washington, D.C. 20250

MAY 24 2010

The Honorable Michael K. Simpson
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment,
and Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
U.S. House of Representatives
1016 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Simpson:

Enclosed is the Forest Service comprehensive recruitment and retention plan for firefighters in Region 5, as required on page 1150 of the House Appropriations Committee Print accompanying the Omnibus Appropriations Act, 2009 (H.R. 1105; Public Law 111-8).

A similar letter is being sent to Congressman James P. Moran and Senators Dianne Feinstein and Lamar Alexander.

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Thomas J. Vilsack
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USDA Forest Service Report on Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Plan in Region 5

Firefighter Recruitment and Retention Plan

The firefighter retention plan was implemented in Fiscal Year (FY) 2009. Prior to the plan's implementation, Region 5 had 363 vacancies in June 2008, representing an 8 percent vacancy rate against a planned staffing level of 4,469 positions. After implementation of the plan, the vacancy rate dropped to 4 percent or 178 vacancies as of January 2010 (see attachment 1).

The plan included 4 actions being taken by the Forest Service:

1. All seasonal firefighters were offered the option to convert to full-time firefighter positions. A total of 900 positions will convert to full time within FY 2010. The estimated cost of the conversion in FY 2010 is \$17,076,000.
2. Effective March 1, 2009 a one year 10 percent Retention allowance for firefighters in grades GS-05 through GS-08 was implemented. At the end of 2009, 1,442 employees received the allowance at a one year cost of \$6,874,000. The one year costs were split across two fiscal years, with the FY 2009 cost at \$3,951,000 and FY 2010 cost at \$2,923,000. The Forest Service decided to continue the retention incentive another year on January 25, 2010, to have a longer period of time to determine the effectiveness of the incentive. The estimated FY 2010 cost for the extension is \$4,050,000.
3. The Forest Service will develop a plan of action by June 2010 on the requirements needed to determine if a special pay rate for California is needed. If the analysis shows the need, a request will be pursued through proper channels for submission to the Office of Personnel Management. The effectiveness of the 10 percent retention allowance must be determined prior to the pursuit of a special pay rate.

After review, the Forest Service did not pursue ordered standby as an alternative to portal-to-portal pay. The complexity, cost of administration, and the ineffectiveness of ordered standby as a one-for-one alternative to portal-to-portal all combined to support the decision to abandon the proposal.

Spending Plan

Of the \$28 million the Congress has appropriated for the firefighter retention incentive plan, \$3,951,000 was obligated in FY 2009, \$24,049,00 is planned to be obligated in FY 2010. The table below provides detail:

| Spending Plan | FY 2009 | FY 2010 | TOTAL |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| First Year 10% Retention Allowance | \$3,951,000 | \$2,923,000 | \$6,874,000 |
| Second Year 10% Retention Allowance | 0 | 4,050,000 | 4,050,000 |
| First Year Promotions | 0 | 17,076,000 | 17,076,000 |
| TOTAL | \$3,951,000 | \$24,049,000 | \$28,000,000 |

NOTE:

P.L. 110-329 the supplemental

\$25,000,000 is for preparedness for retention initiatives in areas at high risk of catastrophic wildfire that face recurrent staffing shortages.

P.L. 11-8 the 2009 Omnibus - Conference Report

Preparedness - The bill provides the fiscal year 2008 funding level, plus \$6,181,000 for fixed costs, plus \$3,000,000 to continue the firefighter retention initiative funded through P.L. 110-329.

Appendix 1: Planned, Current and Vacant Temporary and Permanent Positions

| Grade(s) | Appointment & Tour of Duty | | Angeles | Cleveland | Eldorado | Inyo | Klamath | Lassen | Los Padres | Mendocino | Modoc | Six Rivers | Plumas | San Bernardino | Sequoia | Shasta Trinity | Sierra | Stanislaus | Tahoe | Tahoe Basin | Regional Office | Grand Total |
|--------------------|------------------------------|---------|---------|-----------|----------|------|---------|--------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|--------|----------------|---------|----------------|--------|------------|-------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|
| 2 3 4 5 | Apprentice Permanent 18/8 PP | Planned | 57 | 46 | 25 | 16 | 38 | 32 | 49 | 23 | 15 | 32 | 29 | 50 | 43 | 38 | 30 | 33 | 30 | 12 | 0 | 598 |
| | | Current | 101 | 76 | 30 | 26 | 56 | 26 | 69 | 37 | 34 | 33 | 47 | 90 | 58 | 54 | 47 | 52 | 56 | 17 | 0 | 909 |
| | | Vacant | -44 | -30 | -5 | -10 | -18 | 6 | -20 | -14 | -19 | -1 | -18 | -40 | -15 | -16 | -17 | -19 | -26 | -5 | 0 | -311 |
| 5 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | 87 | 75 | 40 | 25 | 58 | 51 | 75 | 34 | 25 | 44 | 42 | 78 | 59 | 60 | 44 | 49 | 43 | 16 | 14 | 919 |
| | | Current | 9 | 28 | 12 | 1 | 9 | 5 | 23 | 4 | 4 | 14 | 6 | 20 | 13 | 5 | 8 | 9 | 6 | 4 | 10 | 190 |
| | | Vacant | 78 | 47 | 28 | 24 | 49 | 46 | 52 | 30 | 21 | 30 | 36 | 58 | 46 | 55 | 36 | 40 | 37 | 12 | 4 | 729 |
| 2 3 4 5 | Temporary 1039 Hrs | Planned | 67 | 55 | 35 | 20 | 59 | 46 | 58 | 29 | 20 | 46 | 47 | 58 | 71 | 53 | 44 | 48 | 44 | 18 | 34 | 852 |
| | | Current | 101 | 72 | 58 | 34 | 90 | 98 | 90 | 45 | 22 | 75 | 65 | 76 | 102 | 92 | 63 | 69 | 55 | 25 | 38 | 1270 |
| | | Vacant | -34 | -17 | -23 | -14 | -31 | -52 | -32 | -18 | -2 | -29 | -18 | -18 | -31 | -39 | -19 | -21 | -11 | -7 | -4 | -418 |
| Sub Total Planned | | | 211 | 176 | 100 | 61 | 155 | 129 | 182 | 86 | 60 | 122 | 118 | 186 | 173 | 151 | 118 | 130 | 117 | 46 | 48 | 2369 |
| *Sub Total Current | | | 211 | 176 | 100 | 61 | 155 | 129 | 182 | 86 | 60 | 122 | 118 | 186 | 173 | 151 | 118 | 130 | 117 | 46 | 48 | 2369 |
| Sub Total Vacant | | | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

* Temporary hiring ongoing, assumes all Temporary hiring planned will be met during fire season.

Table 5 displays the current condition of the permanent and temporary employees in FFAM. The largest numbers of remaining vacancies occur at the grade 5 level. These positions are currently set aside for apprentices that complete their training program and graduate at the grade 5 level. Apprentices are hired at the grades 2-5 level.

Currently there are 909 apprentices working toward graduating to fill the 729 vacant grade 5 positions. In the Interim Forests are hiring additional 418 temporary employees to fill the gap (during fire season only).

Fire, Fuels and Aviation Management Personnel Grades 6-15 (Permanent) 01-06-10

| Grade | Appointment | | Angeles | Cleveland | Eldorado | Inyo | Klamath | Lassen | Los Padres | Mendocino | Modoc | Six Rivers | Plumas | San Bernardino | Sequoia | Shasta Trinity | Sierra | Stanislaus | Tahoe | Tahoe Basin | Regional Office | Grand Total | | |
|-------------------|-------------------|---------|---------|-----------|----------|------|---------|--------|------------|-----------|-------|------------|--------|----------------|---------|----------------|--------|------------|-------|-------------|-----------------|-------------|----|---|
| 6 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | 40 | 36 | 20 | 12 | 34 | 25 | 38 | 20 | 13 | 25 | 27 | 34 | 28 | 30 | 23 | 32 | 23 | 8 | 16 | 484 | | |
| | | Current | 36 | 36 | 14 | 10 | 21 | 23 | 35 | 10 | 5 | 15 | 13 | 32 | 23 | 27 | 19 | 20 | 16 | 6 | 15 | 376 | | |
| | | Vacant | 4 | 0 | 6 | 2 | 13 | 2 | 3 | 10 | 8 | 10 | 14 | 2 | 5 | 3 | 4 | 12 | 7 | 2 | 1 | 108 | | |
| 7 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | 57 | 50 | 27 | 19 | 36 | 35 | 47 | 23 | 23 | 35 | 36 | 60 | 47 | 42 | 39 | 31 | 26 | 8 | 10 | 651 | | |
| | | Current | 58 | 51 | 26 | 18 | 36 | 27 | 40 | 23 | 21 | 30 | 30 | 60 | 42 | 37 | 33 | 28 | 29 | 7 | 10 | 606 | | |
| | | Vacant | -1 | -1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 8 | 7 | 0 | 2 | 5 | 6 | 0 | 5 | 5 | 6 | 3 | -3 | 1 | 0 | 45 | | |
| 8 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | 40 | 37 | 16 | 10 | 21 | 18 | 35 | 15 | 13 | 20 | 20 | 36 | 26 | 26 | 21 | 18 | 20 | 6 | 8 | 404 | | |
| | | Current | 41 | 37 | 15 | 11 | 21 | 20 | 34 | 14 | 13 | 18 | 21 | 36 | 27 | 26 | 20 | 21 | 19 | 6 | 4 | 404 | | |
| | | Vacant | -1 | 0 | 1 | -1 | 0 | -2 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | -1 | 0 | -1 | 0 | 1 | -3 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 | | |
| 9 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | 24 | 18 | 15 | 6 | 16 | 16 | 22 | 11 | 9 | 17 | 13 | 22 | 20 | 19 | 19 | 13 | 17 | 4 | 31 | 310 | | |
| | | Current | 24 | 18 | 14 | 6 | 18 | 17 | 23 | 10 | 8 | 13 | 17 | 23 | 22 | 19 | 17 | 13 | 19 | 4 | 25 | 310 | | |
| | | Vacant | 0 | -2 | 1 | 0 | -2 | -1 | -1 | 1 | 1 | 4 | -4 | -1 | -2 | 0 | 2 | 0 | -2 | 0 | 8 | 0 | | |
| 10 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | 2 | | 2 | | 2 | | 4 | 2 | | 2 | 3 | 2 | | 4 | 2 | 4 | | | | 29 | | |
| | | Current | 2 | | 2 | | 2 | | 4 | 2 | | 2 | 3 | 2 | | 2 | 2 | 3 | | | | 26 | | |
| | | Vacant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | | |
| 11 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | 7 | 5 | 4 | 6 | 10 | 7 | 8 | 4 | 6 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 7 | 8 | 8 | 6 | 7 | 1 | 22 | 135 | | |
| | | Current | 7 | 4 | 3 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 4 | 7 | 5 | 7 | 6 | 7 | 7 | 6 | 6 | 2 | 20 | 124 | | |
| | | Vacant | 0 | 1 | 1 | -1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | -1 | 2 | 11 | | |
| 12 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 33 | 50 | | |
| | | Current | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 28 | 43 | |
| | | Vacant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 | 7 | |
| 13 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | | 17 | 34 | |
| | | Current | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 14 | 30 | |
| | | Vacant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 4 | |
| 14 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 2 | |
| | | Current | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 2 | 2 |
| | | Vacant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 15 | Permanent 26/0 PP | Planned | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 | |
| | | Current | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | 1 | 1 |
| | | Vacant | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Sub Total Planned | | | 172 | 146 | 88 | 55 | 121 | 103 | 158 | 77 | 65 | 108 | 106 | 163 | 130 | 131 | 114 | 106 | 95 | 28 | 138 | 2100 | | |
| Sub Total Current | | | 170 | 148 | 76 | 53 | 107 | 94 | 146 | 65 | 52 | 87 | 91 | 162 | 122 | 120 | 100 | 93 | 91 | 26 | 119 | 1922 | | |
| Sub Total Vacant | | | 2 | -2 | 10 | 2 | 14 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 21 | 15 | 1 | 8 | 11 | 14 | 13 | 4 | 2 | 19 | 178 | | |

Fire, Fuels and Aviation Management Personnel Grades 2-15 (Apprentice, Permanent) 01-06-10

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|-------------------|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|------|
| Sub Total Planned | 316 | 267 | 151 | 98 | 217 | 186 | 280 | 134 | 105 | 184 | 177 | 291 | 232 | 229 | 188 | 188 | 168 | 56 | 152 | 3617 |
| Sub Total Current | 280 | 252 | 118 | 80 | 172 | 125 | 238 | 106 | 90 | 134 | 144 | 272 | 193 | 179 | 155 | 154 | 153 | 47 | 129 | 3021 |
| Sub Total Vacant | 36 | 15 | 33 | 18 | 45 | 61 | 42 | 28 | 15 | 50 | 33 | 19 | 39 | 50 | 33 | 34 | 15 | 9 | 23 | 596 |

Fire, Fuels and Aviation Management Personnel Grades 2-15 (Apprentice, Permanent, Temporary) 01-06-10

| | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|------|
| Grand Total Planned | 383 | 322 | 186 | 116 | 278 | 232 | 338 | 163 | 125 | 230 | 224 | 349 | 303 | 282 | 232 | 236 | 212 | 74 | 186 | 4469 |
| Grand Total Current | 381 | 324 | 176 | 114 | 262 | 223 | 328 | 151 | 112 | 209 | 209 | 348 | 295 | 271 | 218 | 223 | 208 | 72 | 167 | 4291 |
| Grand Total Vacant | 2 | -2 | 10 | 2 | 14 | 9 | 10 | 12 | 13 | 21 | 15 | 1 | 8 | 11 | 14 | 13 | 4 | 2 | 19 | 178 |

