

**REGION 8 - SOUTHERN  
NATIONAL FORESTS OF FLORIDA  
VETERAN'S PIPELINE TO JOBS IN FIRE AND AVIATION MANAGEMENT**

<b>SUBMITTING REGION/AREA</b>	<b>SUBMITTING DISTRICT/UNIT</b>
National Forests in Florida	National Forests in Florida – F&AM

**CONTACT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE PROPOSAL:**

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**Brief Description of the proposal:**

Proposal Title is “Veteran’s pipeline to Jobs in Fire and Aviation Management”

The National Forests in Florida, F &AM group proposes to utilize an untapped manpower source to overcome workforce diversity barrier in F &AM as identified via MD 715. The Veterans to Fireman’s Program (VTFP) calls for the development of a National MOU with the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) to utilize the Veterans Readjustment Act and Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment (VR&E) Program to employ and train veterans as firefighter. By developing a national MOU, veterans may be recruited at an entry level grade, trained and available for employment within any region. The VTFP will partner with minority veteran groups and other organizations to market the program to typically underserved veterans that assist the National Forest in meeting diversity goals.

Partnership with Shirley Sutliff, Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program Manager, will be established to assure positions are available for these candidates in the Basic Academies beginning in FY 2009.

This will become a sustainable pipeline for diverse Forestry Technicians in Fire.

**What is the total contribution being requested from F&AM for this proposal?**

**Total amount requested to cover salary and travel.**

**FY 2008 request = \$40,000 – program startup**

**FY 2009 request = \$120,000**

**FY 2010 request = \$120,000**

**Total cost over three years - \$280,000**

The startup of \$40,000 is requested for the first year to cover costs associated with establishing the baseline agreements and relationships for the program. This will include identifying and networking with various veterans groups, negotiating MOU and job training plan with Veterans Administration.

**The Regional/Area Fire Director's signature certifies concurrence**

**PHONE #:**

District Ranger (if appropriate):	
Forest Fire Program Manager (mandatory): James Hart	850/523-8562
Forest Supervisor (mandatory): Marsha Kearney	850/523-8549
Regional Representative to F&AM WDC (mandatory): Ted Willis	850/933-0934
Regional/Area Fire Director (mandatory): /s/ Janet Anderson	404/347-3464

**1. Workforce Diversity Management:**

- a. **Workforce Planning: Workforce Planning:** The Veteran to Firefighter program will provide Fire Managers and other resource managers a flexible hiring tool to assist them in meeting workforce diversity goals. It is anticipated over the two years of active recruitment 10 or more diversity candidates will be added to the workforce. With the program being Forest Service-wide, it is hoped that managers will use the program to hire additional veterans not only in fire but in other resource areas.
- b. **Outreach:** Outreach will be conducted via VA employment specialist and a variety of veteran organizations and others organizations, national and local, with emphasis on those that cater to underserved veterans. During the first year of the program Civil Rights will play a vital role in ensuring that appropriate organizations are outreached to meet workforce diversity goals.
- c. **Recruitment:** Rather than the long drawn out traditional method of a vacancy announcement via USAJOBS/AVUE. Recruitment will be done by requesting a list of eligible veterans from the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program who meet basic eligibility criteria (basic eligibility criteria will be the same as those employed via USJOBS/AVUE). Strategic marketing will be conducted in the outreach phase to ensure that identified underrepresented groups are knowledgeable of the VTFP and have made application for training benefits provided by VA.
- d. **Hiring & Selections:** Selectees will be appointed under the Veterans Recruitment Appointment (VRA) authority whereby veterans are appointed to positions in which they are qualified. Appointments are in the excepted service with less cumbersome procedural requirements. Managers will have the opportunity to interview and select within the referred group of veterans who meet basic eligibility criteria.
- e. **Retention:** A national training plan with the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation & Employment Program, the Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program currently has a Department Labor approved training plan, will be pursued to offset salaries for those veterans that qualify. This would serve as a recruitment incentive for vets who qualify. Utilizing the VRA appointment authority would eliminate the lengthy time between recruitment and coming on board and place selected vets in a structured on-the-job training program.

## **2. Management Support:**

The National Forests in Florida, Forest Supervisor and Fire Management Officer supports the program in that it is beneficial to both the FS and VA. The National Forest in Florida Forest Supervisor has offered two to three positions to pilot the program for the first year if funded.

## **3. Scope and Sustainability :**

The VTFP will serve as an alternative recruitment source that can meet Regional recruitment goals while satisfying diversity needs. Use of the VTFP is cost effective and can expedite the hiring process. The VR&E program matches veterans' career interest with their desired career field thereby increasing job satisfaction.

The National MOU will be viable within any region and therefore managers, not only within F &AM, will be able to utilize it as a tool to help meet their workforce goals. It is anticipated that by 2010, the veteran population will increase by 71% becoming an extremely important recruitment source. With this increase in veterans and the President's initiative to increase employment opportunities for returning veterans, this would be a win-win opportunity for both the Forest Service and the VA.

## **4. Partners & Shared Funding/Resources:**

Currently, no collaboration has been made with the VA. However, if funded the project would provide an avenue for underserved veterans who meet basic qualification requirements a career opportunity within F & AM or other resource areas. The partnership with the VA could possibly cover at least half or more of the cost through a structure OJT program to the full performance level (GS-5). Additionally, the VTFP will assist Forest Service in meeting its diversity goals by strategically marketing the VTFP to underserved groups who would not normally satisfy Forest Service qualification requirements.

Shirley Sutliff, WFAP Program Coordinator, will pass this proposal to Paul Bannister, Bureau of Land Management representative to the WFAP Steering Committee, for Paul to discuss with WO BLM Fire Managers. Improving diversity is a priority in the BLM at this time and Shirley has been visiting with Paul and Ken Rock, BLM employee on detail to WFAP, about what the Nat'l F&AM Workforce Diversity Committee is working on.

## **5. Integration with Civil Rights and Human Capital Management Professionals:**

- Explain CR involvement in implementing the proposal. – Program manager will consult with CR in identifying barriers, underserved groups within the FS workforce and outreach sources. Will work with CR to devise an outreach campaign to ensure that the targeted underserved groups are reached.
- Explain HCM involvement in implementing the proposal (workforce planning, recruitment, etc.) - HCM will be needed to work with managers on defining workforce planning goals for their units and how to best accomplish goals. HCM will process employment paperwork and ensure that the appropriate authorities and guidelines are utilized. Additionally, a HCM member will be on the team that develops "basic eligibility criteria".

**6. Management Directive (MD) 715:**

**Under-representation within F &AM:** African American, Hispanic, Disable within the GS-462 series with 6c coverage.

**Barrier:** AVUE has been identified as a barrier to hiring/selections. Additionally, with lessons learned from the past fire hiring campaign, very few diversity candidates meet qualification requirements for the GS-462-4/5/6 which most entry level positions are advertised. Attracting candidates at the lower entry grade level, GS-1, 2, 3 & 4. The lengthy time between outreach, recruitment, selection and coming on board.

**Action:** Special emphasis, possible MOU, will be placed on organizations that cater to underserved veterans to ensure that underserved veterans are aware of the opportunities and apply for their veteran benefits. Selectees will be hired under the VRA authority. Therefore, eliminating the need to advertise via AVUE; therefore eliminating the lengthy time between outreach, recruitment, selection and coming on board. Selections officials will receive a list of veterans who meet basic eligibility criteria set forth by the Forest Service. The MOU with the VA would call for the VA to pay salaries differences between the GS-1, 2, 3 & 4 grade levels and the GS-5 full performance level.

**7. Measurement of Success:**

Workforce data for the GS-462-05, with 6c coverage, for the year prior to the start of the project will be compared against data 18 months after the start of the project. If successful, the GS-462-05 with 6c coverage should show an increase in the targeted underrepresented groups.