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Date: March 23, 2005

Route To:

Subject: Call for Workforce Diversity Projects

To: Director, R-6 Fire & Aviation Management

Enclosed for your consideration is a grant proposal from the Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest.

The Forest's F&AM organization is currently working on an innovative program to recruit and train quality diverse candidates into fire positions. This program has an emphasis on building relationships with underserved communities, identifying and developing role models from these communities, and strengthening relationships that will assist us in building a skilled and diverse workforce into the future.

We have made every effort to answer the guidelines in this proposal. If you need any additional information or clarification about our proposal, please contact Dave Johnson, Fire Management Staff Officer, at 425-744-3510.

Thank you for your consideration of this proposal for a grant.

/s/ John Phipps
JOHN PHIPPS
Forest Supervisor

Enclosure

**Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest
Fire and Aviation Management Workforce Diversity Proposal
March 2005**

Proposal

The Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (MSF) is seeking funding to continue more effective development of the Type 2 Initial Attack (IA) fire crew based in urban Seattle. The MSF is uniquely positioned to recruit and hire highly qualified applicants from diverse communities located within the Puget Sound region. This crew is a high-quality resource for fire suppression, fuels, and other resource projects. Recruitment efforts are focused in diverse communities where the Forest is expanding existing partnerships and/or capitalizing on opportunities to develop new partnerships.

This crew is a crucial component of a long-term, comprehensive program with the following goals: (1) recruit and train quality diverse candidates that would become highly competitive for Fire and Aviation Management (F&AM) positions on the MSF and other National Forests; and (2) provide the opportunity to build on quality relationships with underrepresented communities through expanding existing partnerships and building new ones.

The MSF will ensure that the crew meets National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) standards for a Type 2 IA crew. Crewmembers will gain skills and experience while stationed close to home, family, and community networks. Participation in this program is expected to create a pipeline of competitive, highly qualified, entry-level candidates for F&AM positions on other National Forests.

Efforts to staff the MSF Type 2 crew are nearly complete with diversity candidates filling about 75% of the positions. The outreach effort has identified potential candidates in excess of available positions. These candidates will be referred to other F&AM organizations.

During the off season, crew leadership would: (1) work to establish new and sustain existing partnerships with diverse communities and organizations within the Puget Sound area; (2) network with fire managers seeking high quality entry level candidates for vacant F&AM positions; (3) obtain program funding; and (4) track individual development.

Projected Cost

Personnel	\$342,871
Training	17,500
Fleet	13,920
Other Resources (Materials, supplies, medical testing, lump sum AL, etc)	<u>58,742</u>
TOTAL	\$433,033

Grant Evaluation Guidelines

The following are responses to the F&AM Workforce Diversity 2005 Grant Guidelines.

1) *The proposal should build partnerships and networks with under represented communities that gain support and acceptance from these communities.*

The Mt. Baker-Snoqualmie National Forest (MSF) is located in Western Washington within the Puget Sound region that extends from the Canadian Border to Mount Rainier National Park. This area encompasses a diverse and growing population of more than 5 million people, including a large percentage of [population groups](#) that are currently underrepresented in the Forest's Fire and Aviation Management (F&AM) workforce.

While the F&AM workforce has made some strides over the years to increase diversity, it still does not fully reflect the population it serves. The MSF can help mitigate this by developing a Type 2 IA crew based in the Puget Sound basin. This staffing effort is based on focused recruitment from diverse communities using established contacts and by pursuing additional community connections.

The MSF is also partnering with adjacent parks and forests including the Okanogan-Wenatchee National Forest, North Cascades National Park, and Mount Rainier National Park. Crew members will be provided opportunities to learn about the Forest Service, Park Service, and Bureau of Land Management through project work and fire assignments for these agencies. As the crew staffing is completed, the crew leadership will continue to seek out additional partnership opportunities with other agencies and organizations within the Puget Sound area. In an effort to strengthen relationships with underserved communities and organizations, work will include projects that are community based.

The following are some of the diverse organizations that have been contacted and/or have provided access to potential candidates:

WILD

Steps Ahead and Steps Beyond Community for Youth
Seattle Youth Employment

MESA

King County Center for Career Alternatives
Urban League Metro Seattle
Seattle Community Center
NAACP Seattle Chapter
United Indian Tribes Seattle
Curlew Job Center
Upper Skagit Tribe
Lummi Nation
Northwest Indian College
Seattle School District
University of Washington
Skagit Valley Community College

2) *The proposal should have a measurable impact of:*

A. Increased or strengthened formal relationships with minority communities.

Over the past several years the Forest has established relationships with a number of community-based groups through a variety of program areas, including wilderness, recreation and Fire Management. These relationships are being expanded through the MSF Type 2 program. The fire crew will provide a comprehensive approach to community outreach by building new relationships and maintaining old ones; and by providing work experience, mentoring, and career opportunities. In addition to strengthening partnerships, the crew will seek opportunities to engage in community based projects that will give back to partners, engage the community and demonstrate the skills and abilities of the crew. The following are some examples of community partnerships that have already been successful.

Wilderness Intercity Leadership

The MSF has several examples of successful partnerships with diverse community based organizations. One such relationship, established through the Forest's Public Services organization, has been with Wilderness Intercity Leadership (WILD). WILD is a youth leadership program that is part of the International District Housing Alliance program for environmental justice. The Asian community in the International District is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in Seattle. The Forest has been successful in involving WILD youth in past resource-related projects, such as Eagle Watchers. This program has brought youth from the International District to the Forest to monitor eagle activity in the upper Skagit. The youth in turn have brought elders from their community to the Forest and invited them to also participate in Eagle Watchers. This introduction to the National Forest has resulted in several of the WILD youth successfully competing for recreation positions on the MSF. The MSF Type 2 program is another opportunity to enhance relationships with the Asian community in the Seattle International District through groups like WILD.

Steps Ahead

An example of a new partnership resulting from the Type 2 Program is with the Steps Ahead program. Steps Ahead is part of the Community for Youth program within the Seattle School District and is centered at Rainier Beach High School. The Steps Ahead program primarily serves minority youth. Created in 1985, this program helps disadvantaged students' successfully complete high school and become productive members of their community. Students in the program show: a 98% graduation rate; 86% say they gained a sense of personal accountability; and 97% feel connected to the community. The Seattle School District is very interested in the F&AM recruitment efforts and in partnering with the Forest. The MSF crew leadership has met with participants in the program to provide information about Fire Management and help with job applications. Several Steps Ahead participants are strong candidates for positions on the MSF Type 2 crew.

King County Center for Career Alternatives

The King County Center for Career Alternatives serves the minority community in King County. They are enthusiastic about the MSF Type 2 program. This initial contact was also followed by presentations and help with applications.

In addition to the above examples there are a variety of other potential contacts within the minority communities in the Puget Sound Basin. The Skagit Valley has a very large Hispanic community. The MSF Type 2 leadership has initiated contact with the Skagit Valley Community College natural resources and fire programs areas. The crew leaders will continue to work with the college to reach potential candidates for Fire Management positions. Other examples of contacts with communities in the greater Puget Sound Basin include the Lummi and Upper Skagit Tribes.

MESA and Others

Using SCEP, STEP, MESA, historically black colleges and universities, local community colleges and four-year universities, the OLY and MBS have partnered in recruiting 24 students (70% minority) to work in engineering. Recruitment efforts resulted in an increased percentage of minorities and women in the Forest's temporary workforce.

B. Increased outreach, recruitment, retention, and integration of women and minorities at all levels of fire and incident management.

Currently, the existing pool of temporary employees seems to be the primary candidate source for vacant permanent positions. Unfortunately, it is dominated by experienced people that do not adequately reflect the population they serve. The MSF Type 2 fire crew program would address this issue by establishing relationships with minority communities and groups to offer entry level career opportunities close to family and community support networks and provide training, experience and a career ladder to reach other positions in the Fire Management organization.

The crew will have a strong emphasis on training, performance, professionalism, and teamwork. Current staffing efforts indicate that the crew will meet the NWCG Type 2 IA standard during the first season. This will be accomplished with 70-80% diversity. Type 2 IA crews are in high demand; this will afford program leaders the opportunity to provide crewmembers quality training and experience.

The intent is to develop a fire-ready Type II crew that, when not on fire assignment, will also be available for other resource work for the National Forests and National Parks in the surrounding region. Resource managers are looking at creative opportunities in which the crew could work for short periods of time (between fire assignments) on resource work such as removal of invasive species, trail maintenance, etc. Crew members would be given career counseling and encouraged to apply for future assignments with land management agencies.

The following program goals are intended to facilitate retention and integration:

- Providing a safe, fully qualified, effective and diverse 20 person Type II fire crew.
- Providing quality developmental experiences for potential future entrants into federal wildland firefighting jobs.
- Learning how to effectively recruit and retain diverse firefighters from an urban environment.
- Learning how to effectively transition high performing crew members to rural locations.
- Creating a portal for providing diverse candidates for future temporary and permanent jobs with wildland firefighting agencies.
- Share learning allowing this model to be replicated elsewhere.

As crew members gain experience over time, they would be moved into positions to provide mentorship, leadership, and serve as role models.

3) *The proposal should have management's support and commitment to sustain the project beyond the initial funding period to realize the benefits over time.*

The **Forest F&AM** has received strong management support and commitment for its efforts to develop initial implementation of a Type 2 IA qualified fire crew staffed with diverse applicants. . The Forest Supervisor has garnered **Regional Office** support, as well as support from **other Forest Supervisors** and **National Park Superintendents** in Washington State, that this is a viable strategy that will further the objectives to diversify the F&AM workforce and could serve as a model.

The MSF Type 2 program has strong commitment and support from the **MSF Forest Supervisor, Fire Management** and **other staff areas**. However, continued commitment and funding will be required to ensure the sustainability of this effort beyond the initial funding request. Additional funding support from agency partners, challenge cost share agreements with diversity groups, funded fuels projects and suppression base salary savings will supplement the funding and ensure the success of this program over time.

4) *The proposal should include an evaluation of options to share the costs of supporting the proposal.*

We are looking for investors and partners that want to participate and/or support this program. Several options are available, including the following:

- Providing funded work projects for the crew
- Investing in the crew by providing seed money for startup and training
- Providing debt relief if the crew is not fully successful in recovering costs via project work and fire assignments.

Other funding options include:

- Creating cost share agreements with community partner organizations.
- Utilizing funded fuels projects.
- Creating cost savings through fire suppression base salary savings.

The Okanogan and Wenatchee National Forests and the North Cascades and Mount Rainier National Parks have expressed an interest in partnering with us on this program.

5) *The proposal should be integrated with Civil Rights/Human Resources efforts.*

In order to be successful in its efforts to outreach to communities and staff the crew, the F&AM is working very closely with the Forest's Human Resources and Civil Rights personnel.

Crew leaders are experienced with the AVUE process and recognize that the process might seem daunting to some potential applicants. The crew leaders have made an extra effort to assist applicants with the process.

Crew leaders have met with potential crew members, explained the program, and helped candidate's complete applications. Crew members will be mentored to help prepare them for future fire management positions. This relationship should help increase the number of candidates available to fill future positions.

The Crew leaders will meet the objectives in MD 715 by providing tracking and reporting accomplishments as directed.

Finally, as mentioned previously, the MSF Type 2 crew will continue to establish, build and strengthen partnerships between the Forest Service and minority communities within the Puget Sound Region. A variety of networks and partnerships have been utilized and developed during the process of staffing the MSF Type 2 crew.

6) *The proposal should include a method to evaluate the magnitude, scope, complexity and value of the proposal.*

The MSF Type 2 program will be evaluated over time. The success of any program designed to increase diversity will require multi-year commitments and monitoring.

Short term success measures

- Provide a safe, fully qualified, effective and diverse 20 person Type II fire crew.
- Provide quality developmental experiences for potential future entrants into federal wildland fire fighting jobs
- Learn how to effectively recruit and retain diverse firefighters from an urban environment.
- Create a portal for providing diverse candidates for future temporary and permanent jobs with wildland firefighting agencies.
- Meet the rigorous NWCG Type 2 IA standard
- Attain 70% diversity for the first season
- Continue to build relationships by creating and supporting numerous partnerships with diverse community groups
- Network with fire managers in need of high quality entry level candidates for F&AM positions
- Seek program funding

Longer-term success measures:

- Crewmembers successfully moving on to other F&AM organizations to fill entry level leadership positions
- Continuing to successfully recruit diversity candidates for entry level positions on the MSF Type 2 crew(s).
- Employee retention and advancement in Fire Management.
- Learn how to effectively transition high performing crew members to rural locations.