



# NEWS RELEASE

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## **FOREST SERVICE AGGRESSIVELY IMPLEMENTING HEALTHY FORESTS LEGISLATION**

WASHINGTON, Jan. 12, 2004 – Agriculture Secretary Ann M. Veneman announced that the U.S. Department of Agriculture has issued an interim final rule for a special administrative review process for hazardous fuel reduction projects in national forests.

“I am very proud of this quick response to implement the Healthy Forests legislation. A pre-decisional administrative review process will assist federal land managers in reducing hazardous fuels in high priority areas,” said Veneman. “We are implementing this legislation aggressively to lessen the impacts of wildland fires on communities and our natural resources.”

“The interim final rule will facilitate collaborative planning efforts with early and meaningful public participation during the project planning phase for hazardous fuel reduction projects,” said Forest Service Chief Dale Bosworth. “In addition, it will provide the opportunity for timely resolution of outstanding issues during the analysis phase and prior to a decision.”

Although the interim final rule is effective immediately, the Forest Service is accepting public comments on the rule for 90 days.

The rule, authorized by the Healthy Forests Restoration Act of 2003, appeared in the Jan. 9, 2004 *Federal Register*. The Act, signed into law by President Bush on Dec. 3, 2003, is a series of new legislative authorities that streamline current administrative decisions and provide courts direction when reviewing fuel reduction or forest health projects. Additional information is available at <http://www.fs.fed.us/projects/hfi/>.

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