Bureau of Indian Affairs achieves presidential goal and sets new record high for removing hazardous fuel on more than 364,000 acres in FY 2020

Media Contact: NewsMedia@bia.gov
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WASHINGTON – The Department of the Interior announced today that it has once again made substantial progress in Fiscal Year 2020 to reduce the risk of wildfire nationwide, treating 1.5 million acres of public land. The Bureau of Indian Affairs treated more than 364,000 acres across Indian Country, which is a record for the bureau. This is a historic high that more than double's BIA's accomplishments from last year (~154,000 acres) and is twice what BIA's four-year annual average is, which has hovered near 178,000 acres.

"President Trump set aggressive targets to more effectively and actively manage our rangelands and forests to prevent catastrophic wildfires. He took bold action on this issue, which had been missing in previous administrations," **said Secretary David L. Bernhardt**. "Answering the call in hitting our significant milestones were our top-class wildland firefighter crews, who have been on the front lines working around the clock to conduct these preventative treatments and extinguish destructive blazes throughout the West this year. They deserve our unending appreciation."

"Tribes that live on reservations, rancherias and pueblos depend on their land for physical, economic, cultural and their spiritual wellbeing," said **Assistant Secretary- Indian Affairs, Tara Sweeney**. "I'm grateful President Trump, has elevated the importance of treating landscapes so that our Native communities and villages are not only protected from the threat of wildfires but have healthier, more diverse landscapes to call home."

In December 2018, President Trump issued Executive Order 13855, directing the DOI and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to promote active management of America's forests and rangelands to reduce wildfire risk. Additionally, Secretary Order 3372, issued in January 2019, builds upon the principles and priorities of Executive Order 13855, and requires that additional actions be taken by DOI bureaus to protect communities and prevent wildfires as they work to meet the mandates of Executive Order 13855.

"Not only are we treating more acres," said **Darryl LaCounte, Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs,** "monitoring data shows that our treatments are 96% effective. This demonstrates that our treatments are successfully protecting our communities and meeting our management goals."

This important work has reduced hazardous fuel in fire-prone areas, provided important economic resources to local tribal communities, and improved firefighter safety and efficiency. These treatments are also helping firefighters keep wildfires small, controlling 99% of BIA's wildfires in the first 24 hours, which is the highest initial attack rate of any bureau within the Department of the Interior.

This year, by embracing Active Management, Indian Country was able to:

- Reduce overgrown vegetation across 364,816 acres, a new historic high.
- Treat 159,819 acres of land infested with non-native and invasive species.
- Harvest 80,000 acres of timber tribes depend on for economic revenue.
    - Protect water quality and minimize post-wildfire threats across 1,181 acres, thereby preventing erosion, mudflows and other negative effects sometimes caused by high-intensity wildfires.

Active Management empowers greater collaborative investment opportunities, marrying Fuels Management with the management of tribal forestlands, woodlands and rangelands. Of the 57 million acres of Trust land, greater than 19.6 million acres of forest, woodland and rangelands (6.1 million acres of commercial forests) are at Very High to Moderate risk of Wildfire. Active Management supports the restoration and maintenance of these ecosystems. And, investments can return 2 to 30 times the cost of suppression in the form of Avoided Cost (a loss not yet incurred i.e. soil erosion, water quality).

*The **Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs** advises the Secretary of the Interior on Indian Affairs policy issues, communicates policy to and oversees the programs of the BIA and the BIE, provides leadership in consultations with tribes, and serves as the DOI official for intra- and inter-departmental coordination and liaison within the Executive Branch on Indian matters.*

*The **Bureau of Indian Affairs** directly administers and funds tribally operated infrastructure, law enforcement and justice, social services (including child welfare), tribal governance, and trust land and natural and energy resources management programs for the nation's federally recognized American Indian and Alaska Native tribes through four offices: Indian Services, Justice Services, Trust Services, and Field Operations.*

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