



THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR
WASHINGTON

ORDER No. 3443

Subject: Elevating and Unifying DOI's Wildland Fire Management Program

Sec. 1. **Purpose.** This Order implements provisions of President Trump's June 12, 2025, Executive Order (EO) 14308, titled "Empowering Commonsense Wildfire Prevention and Response," by streamlining the Department's wildfire capabilities to improve their effectiveness and promoting commonsense, technology-enabled local strategies for land management and wildfire response and mitigation.

Sec. 2. **Authorities.** This Order is issued pursuant to the authority of the EO; section 2 of Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1950 (64 Stat 1262), as amended; the "Service First" authority most recently codified in Section 315 of P.L. 118-234; the Department's statutory authority for land management, and other relevant statutes.

Sec. 3. **Background.** The Department's Wildland Fire Management Program provides fire mitigation and response on more than 500 million acres of public and Tribal lands managed by four Bureaus—(1) Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), (2) Bureau of Land Management (BLM), (3) National Park Service (NPS), and (4) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). Within the Office of the Secretary, the Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) coordinates policy and budget to ensure a unified, consistent execution of the fire mission among these four Bureaus, and the Office of Aviation Services (OAS) maintains aviation safety standards and promotes the economical operation of aircraft in the Department.

Because wildfire burns across landscapes without regard for who owns or manages the land, coordination outside of the Department is just as critical as coordination within it. The Department works closely with the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Forest Service (USFS) to align interagency operations, share resources, and jointly manage wildland fire technology development, aircraft contracting, fire support services, and other operational capabilities.

The Department collaborates with other partners through the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, which provides a consistent framework for coordination across Federal, Tribal, State, and local wildland fire organizations. These partnerships are enabled through cooperative agreements and common training and certification standards, ensuring that wildland fire personnel from all jurisdictions can operate safely and effectively together.

Although the Nation's response to wildland fire is a notable example of intergovernmental collaboration, our national wildfire response program can be greatly improved. At the Federal level, bureaucracy and unnecessary regulation slow prevention and response efforts and are costly for taxpayers. Disparate fire aviation standards and duplicative, obsolete wildland fire procurement and information technology (IT) systems hinder the agility and effectiveness this Nation deserves. Wildland fire research often lacks strategic alignment with mission priorities.

Outdated agreements and inconsistent pre- and post-fire policies can limit the ability to scale resources and reduce long-term risk. Together, these challenges underscore the urgent need for the Department, as directed by the EO and in partnership with USFS, “to the maximum degree practicable and consistent with applicable law, consolidate their wildland fire programs to achieve the most efficient and effective use of wildland fire offices, coordinating bodies, programs, budgets, procurement processes, and research and, as necessary, recommend additional measures to advance this objective.”

Wildfire activity across the Nation is becoming more intense, frequent, and destructive, threatening lives, property, air and water quality, landscapes, ecosystems, and infrastructure. Moreover, ownership of and thus responsibility for the land on which wildfires occur vary not only among the Federal government, State, Tribal, and private entities but also among the Federal government itself. Given this increasing threat to the Nation from wildfire, the hazards that our firefighters willingly face every day, and the inefficiencies created by multiple wildland fire agencies in the Federal government, I am directing the Department to elevate the wildland fire program to the status it deserves by unifying it within the U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS). Our firefighters and managers will form a purpose-built organization capable of meeting the growing challenge of wildland fire response and mitigation.

For the purposes of this Order, “unification” shall not be considered synonymous with “consolidation”; rather, “unification” shall mean the strategic alignment of resources, including but not limited to, the following:

- a. physical resources like aviation and vehicles;
- b. pay, benefits, retirement, training, and human resource systems;
- c. consistent application of firefighting *strategies*, which differs from *tactics* that are situational;
- d. technology for early fire detection; and
- e. modernization of communication and life safety tools to ensure cross-team coordination when jointly fighting wildland fires.

Sec. 4. Elevating and Streamlining Federal Wildland Fire Governance: DOI Unification and Restructuring

- a. To achieve the most efficient and effective use of the Department’s wildland fire organizations, this Order directs the establishment of USWFS reporting directly to the Secretary of the Interior or his designee. By October 31, 2025, the Department’s primary wildland fire and aviation Bureaus and Offices—BIA, BLM, FWS, NPS, OWF, and OAS—will finalize a plan, under the direction of the Secretary and the Deputy Secretary, and in consultation with senior Departmental leadership and key stakeholders, for consolidating line authority and management of the entirety of the wildland fire program identified under the wildland fire management appropriations and extended to other DOI lands as appropriate. Once approved by the Secretary, implementation of this plan will commence on January 12, 2026.

- b. In developing the plan, the Deputy Secretary, in coordination with the Assistant Secretary for Policy, Management and Budget, shall consider outside input when formulating the best and most effective strategy for unification, including from State, Tribal, and local partners with relevant wildfire experience.
- c. There is to be established a USWFS Fire Chief to lead USWFS, to be recruited or appointed promptly. The USWFS Fire Chief will be a Senior Executive Service position.
- d. The USWFS Fire Chief must possess appropriate wildland fire management experience commensurate with the position.
- e. While authority over the program, its appropriations, firefighters, and managers will be shifting to the USWFS Fire Chief, line officers in the Department's land management Bureaus will continue to share responsibility for delivering on the wildland fire mission. Pre-fire risk reduction, fire response, and post-fire rehabilitation and repair all require interdisciplinary work across numerous fire and resource programs. The restructuring will in no way impede consistent collaboration with land managers to ensure aggressive fuels treatment strategies, effective and nimble wildfire response, and thoughtful post-fire recovery. Nothing in this Order shall be construed as relieving Bureau line officers from their responsibility to manage public lands in a manner that aggressively addresses their relevant wildfire risk.
- f. To meet the instruction in the EO "to achieve the most efficient and effective use of wildland fire offices" for fire response, the USWFS will reduce layers to ensure prompt, effective decision-making.
- g. The newly appointed USWFS Fire Chief will as soon as practicable review the distribution of DOI fire response units and assets and protection responsibilities.

Sec. 5. Advancing the Goals of the EO in Collaboration with USFS. While the new USWFS awaits full unification with USFS' fire management organization, the two departments will increase the use of existing authorities to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of wildland fire management across all involved agencies. In response to the EO, senior leadership from DOI and USFS have identified actionable solutions to address longstanding inefficiencies, friction points, and structural challenges within the Federal wildfire response system. Unification of targeted administrative functions and consistent application of policy between the two departments will yield immediate and significant improvements to the national wildfire response system in the following areas:

- a. To address inefficiencies and modernize operations, aviation, and coordination systems, I hereby direct DOI in coordination with USFS to take immediately following actions:
 - Within 30 days, drive comprehensive modernization of the Federal wildland fire aviation program, including but not limited to, the following the areas:
 - unified aircraft and pilot inspection;
 - carding, procurement, contracting;

- standards, and acceptance processes;
 - propose a timeline for implementation within 30 days.
 - Evaluate and restructure existing coordination and governance bodies to eliminate redundancy and misalignment, and to consolidate or establish new governance structures with clear authority, accountability, and annual performance standards within 120 days.
 - Improve interagency interoperability through qualification and training standardization, and skills crosswalks with the Department of Homeland Security, Tribes, States, and local governments within 180 days.
- b. To strengthen interagency wildfire coordination and response, I hereby direct DOI in coordination with USFS to take the following unification actions:
- Revise the Master Interagency Agreement for Wildland Fire Management to ensure consistent alignment in policy and program delivery across DOI and USFS within 120 days.
 - Immediately initiate use of Service First authorities to begin establishment of joint USDA and DOI procurement, contracting, and payment centers, to the extent possible, for wildland fire management to consolidate payment and auditing systems and accelerate reimbursement procedures to States, Tribes, contractors, and local governments; propose a timeline for implementation within 90 days.
 - Work with interagency partners at the national and regional levels to evaluate the efficiency and effectiveness of the current Geographic Area boundaries and pursue necessary modifications within 120 days.
 - Initiate the consolidation and modernization of wildland fire Predictive Services at the national and regional levels into a centralized Fire Intelligence function to improve the Nation's mobilization of resources in advance of and in response to wildfire; propose a timeline for implementation within 30 days.
 - Standardize wildland fire position descriptions and establish a joint Administratively Determined hiring program and pay plan within 180 days.
- c. To improve Federal partnerships and reduce administrative burden, I hereby direct DOI, in coordination with USFS and by employing a broad, formal process for soliciting input from key stakeholders such as State, Tribal and local government, to take the following actions:
- Complete revision of the Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreement template to simplify structure, streamline billing and reimbursement, and expedite review of new wildfire coordinating agreements within 120 days.

- Immediately initiate the modernization, consolidation, and simplification processes for grants, agreements, and assistance to increase accessibility, accelerate reimbursement, and eliminate administrative delays; propose a timeline for implementation within 30 days;
 - Identify and promptly remedy any backlog of reimbursement to any State, local government, or Tribal partner related to past wildfire-related activities.
- d. To ensure wildfire research and technology investments are fit-for-purpose and field-ready, I hereby direct DOI in coordination with USFS, to take the following actions:
- Establish a joint governance structure to coordinate wildfire-related research, technology deployment, including new solutions in early fire detection, and IT modernization and integration across the Federal wildfire community within 60 days.
 - Conduct a joint review of wildfire research portfolios to identify duplication and ensure alignment to support operational priorities, and firefighter and public safety within 120 days.
 - Assess and make recommendations to modernize standards for Personal Protective Equipment to ensure the long-term health and safety of wildland firefighters within 270 days.
 - Initiate design of a unified Wildfire Enterprise IT architecture with secure, interoperable systems accessible to Federal, Tribal, State, and academic partners; propose a timeline for implementation within 60 days.
- e. To integrate pre- and post-fire activities into a comprehensive and unified wildfire strategy, I hereby direct DOI in coordination USFS, to take the following actions:
- Utilize a unified wildfire risk mapping tool to plan mitigation activities and demonstrate wildfire risk reduction accomplishments across Federal, Tribal, State, local, and private lands; propose a timeline for implementation within 30 days.
 - Establish a 5-year emergency stabilization and rehabilitation framework including recommended consistent appropriations language and shared authorities within 270 days.
 - Update standards, processes, and policies to streamline permitting for bulk-power operations and maintenance on Federal rights-of-way and associated lands within 270 days.
 - Work with USFS and the Environmental Protection Agency to eliminate regulatory barriers for prescribed fire and the use of fire retardant, including revising the exceptional events rule, and permitting requirements within 270 days.

- Ensure coordination between the Department's Solicitor's Office and USDA's General Counsel regarding post-fire litigation activities, as appropriate, to effectuate the goals identified in the EO.
- Ensure that the Department's Solicitor's Office confirms the Department's positions and proposed resolutions in wildfire litigation matters advance the wildfire prevention and mitigation efforts identified in the EO. As consistent with applicable law, settlements shall mandate and permit the settlors to engage in best practices to reduce the risk of wildfire ignition from the bulk-power system, including through methods such as vegetation management, the removal of forest-hazardous fuels along transmission lines, improved engineering approaches, safer operational practices, and recovery for firefighting expenditures, without increasing costs for electric-power end users. The Department also should seek to apply proceeds from settlements for wildland fire risk reduction, consistent with applicable law.

Sec. 6. Responsibilities. In coordination with the Deputy Secretary, the Assistant Secretary – Policy, Management and Budget is designated as the Department's lead official for the purposes of implementing the EO and is responsible for ensuring timely implementation of all aspects of this Order, as well as for initiating cross-agency coordination, as appropriate, and completing any notifications or external coordination that may be required. The program Assistant Secretaries of the Department are responsible for ensuring appropriate action in their Bureaus and Offices to ensure effective implementation of this Order. The Assistant Secretary – Indian Affairs is responsible for ensuring appropriate consultation for the actions included in this Order and to ensure that no part of this unification process impedes the Department's effectiveness in addressing wildfire in Indian country.

Sec. 7. Effect of this Order. This Order is intended to improve the internal management of the Department and to ensure implementation of the above-referenced EO. This Order and any resulting reports or recommendations are not intended to and do not create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or equity by a party against the United States, its departments, agencies, instrumentalities or entities, its officers or employees, or any other person. To the extent there is any inconsistency between the provisions of this Order and any Federal laws or regulations, the laws or regulations will control.

Sec. 8. Effective Date. This Order is effective immediately and will remain in effect until it is amended, superseded, or revoked.


Secretary of the Interior

Date: **SEP 10 2025**