

BUDGET The United States Department of the Interior **JUSTIFICATIONS**

and Performance Information
Fiscal Year 2024

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

NOTICE: These budget justifications are prepared for the Interior, Environment and Related Agencies Appropriations Subcommittees. Approval for release of the justifications prior to their printing in the public record of the Subcommittee hearings may be obtained through the Office of Budget of the Department of the Interior.



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Executive Summary

Introduction

Fire is generally a natural and essential component of a healthy ecosystem, but it can be destructive and costly when combined with climate change, drought, altered fire regimes, and increased population and development. In recent decades, the average wildfire has become larger, costlier, and more complex, and wildfires now occur in the United States year-round. Furthermore, climate change has contributed to more frequent and severe wildfire activity, and wildfire itself in turn contributes to climate change through the release of carbon emissions into the atmosphere.

The devastating impacts of severe wildfires have become all too real for communities and wildland firefighters across the country. The National Interagency Fire Center reports there were 68,988 wildfires in the United States last year, which burned 7.5 million acres. The number of wildfires was noticeably higher than the ten-year average.

The President's 2024 budget proposes significant reforms to increase the nation's investments in the wildland fire management workforce. The cornerstone of these long-term reforms is a permanent increase in pay. The Administration proposes legislation to establish a special base rate salary table for wildland firefighters, create a new premium pay category that provides some additional compensation for all hours a wildland fire responder is mobilized on an incident, and establish a streamlined pay cap that provides waiver authority to the Secretary using specific criteria. The budget funds these federal pay reforms and similar pay increases for tribal personnel. These proposals build upon the historic reforms in the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (also known as the "Bipartisan Infrastructure Law") to ensure that wildland fire personnel receive the enhanced support they need to meet evolving mission demands.

The 2024 budget request for the Department of the Interior's Wildland Fire Management program is nearly \$1.7 billion, which is an increase of \$243.1 million or 17.0 percent above the comparable 2023 enacted level. The request includes \$1.3 billion for the Wildland Fire Management account (an increase of \$233.1 million or 21.3 percent above the comparable 2023 enacted level) and \$350.0 million for the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund (an increase of \$10.0 million or 2.9 percent above the 2023 enacted level). In addition to funding pay increases for federal and tribal wildland firefighters, the 2024 budget funds increases in federal and tribal firefighting personnel capacity. The 2024 budget's federal Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) personnel level is 4,080, or 370 above the 2023 enacted level. The budget also will increase tribal FTE personnel by an estimated 55 above the 2023 enacted level, to a total of 813 for 2024.



The wildland fire community includes two Cabinet-level agencies that manage wildland fire on behalf of the federal government: the U.S. Department of the Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Federal Wildland Fire Management Leaders and Partners

The Department of the Interior and the Department of Agriculture (USDA)—through the Forest Service—lead the federal government’s wildland fire management efforts. The goal of Interior’s Wildland Fire Management program is to provide integrated, cost-efficient, and operationally effective actions that meet resource and safety objectives before, during, and after wildfires. The guiding program principles and priorities are to create fire-resilient landscapes, promote fire-adapted communities, and safely and effectively respond to wildfires through strong federal, tribal nation, state, and local collaboration.

Interior’s Wildland Fire Management program primarily comprises the Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) and four bureaus: (1) the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), (2) the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), (3) the National Park Service (NPS), and (4) the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS). In addition, other Interior bureaus and offices (e.g., the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) and the Bureau of Reclamation (BOR)) play an integral role in supporting the program.

In the Department of the Interior, OWF is the principal office responsible for developing, managing, and overseeing wildland fire management policy, planning, budget, program accountability, and review. In carrying out these responsibilities, OWF ensures that implementation of the program is consistent across the Department and adheres to the laws and directives established by Congress and the President, Administration priorities, the Department’s Strategic Plan, and wildland fire policies and directives. OWF also is responsible for developing and managing many of the information technology systems that the wildland fire management community uses for tracking and using data, planning, and responding to wildfires. See the Appendix for an OWF organization chart.

Interior and USDA collaborate with several other federal agencies on wildland fire management. They include the following agencies:

- Department of Commerce (DOC) (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration’s (NOAA) National Weather Service (NWS)),
- Department of Defense (DOD),
- Department of Health and Human Services (e.g., the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMSHA)),
- Department of Homeland Security (Federal Emergency Management Agency’s (FEMA) U.S. Fire Administration),
- Environmental Protection Agency (EPA),
- National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA), and
- Office of Personnel Management (OPM).

USGS Wildland Fire Science Program

The USGS Wildland Fire Science Program works with the Interior Department’s Wildland Fire Management Program to produce fundamental information to identify the causes of wildfires, understand the impacts and benefits of both wildfires and prescribed fires, and to help prevent and manage catastrophic events.

USGS fire scientists provide information and develop tools that are widely used by stakeholders to make decisions before, during, and after wildfires in desert, grassland, tundra, wetland, and forest ecosystems across the United States. In its [Wildland Fire Science Strategic Plan](#), the USGS assessed wildland fire management needs from interviews with 40 organizations and laid out a roadmap to meet those needs working with partners.

For more information, see the USGS budget justification.

Wildland Fire Management Coordination

Interior, USDA Forest Service, and other federal agencies are integral parts of a larger wildland fire management community that works collaboratively to implement a cohesive fire management framework that works to secure the safety of wildland firefighters and the public while mitigating losses from wildfire. Federal interagency wildland fire management is closely coordinated and integrated with the efforts of tribal nations, states, local governments, private, non-profit, and international partners. Programs use interoperable equipment, training, and standards.

Across the nation, wildland fire management is guided by a common policy and approach, and it is implemented through agency line organizations. Partners collaborate using an “all hands, all lands” approach. They use a number of governance structures to develop and maintain this common, integrated approach—ranging from the national, strategic level to regional and local coordination groups.

The Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) is an intergovernmental council that includes federal, tribal nation, state, and local officials. The Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture established WFLC in 2002 in the aftermath of several severe fire seasons. WFLC provides strategic guidance in the



application of policy across multiple jurisdictions. WFLC was instrumental in the development and is involved in continued implementation of the *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy*, which remains the foundation of U.S. wildland fire management policy.

The *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy*, developed in 2014, establishes a national vision for wildland fire management. It represents a commitment to working collaboratively among all stakeholders and across all landscapes through shared stewardship to achieve three national goals:

1. Restore and maintain landscapes,
2. Fire-adapted communities, and
3. Wildfire response.

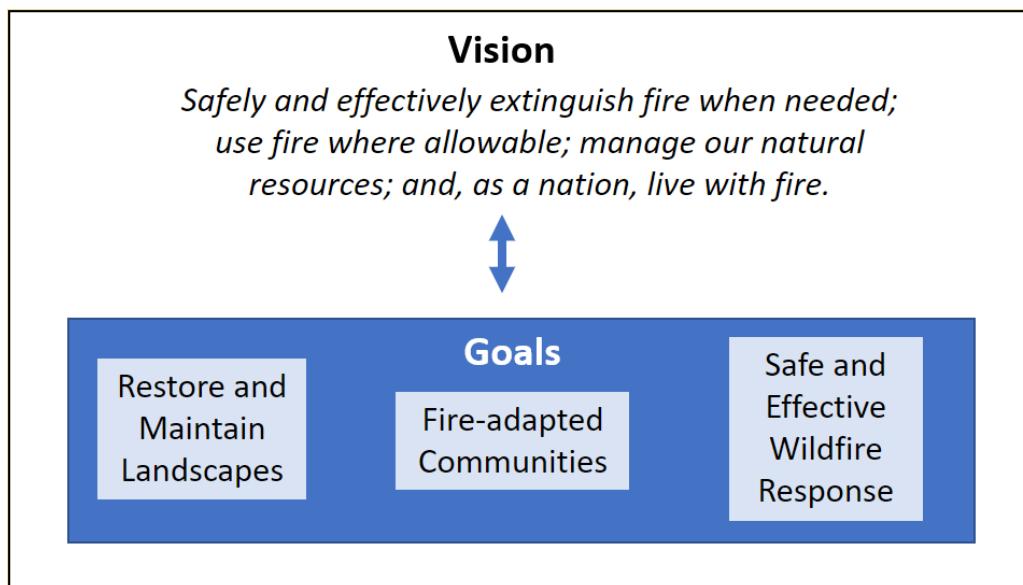


Diagram of the vision and goals of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy

Other important coordinating bodies are the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group, the National Wildfire Coordinating Group, President Biden’s Wildfire Resilience Interagency Working Group, and the Wildfire Mitigation and Management Commission established by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law

President Biden signed the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA), or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), on November 15, 2021. BIL is a once-in-a-generation investment in the nation’s infrastructure and economic competitiveness. This landmark investment is rebuilding America’s critical infrastructure, tackling the climate crisis, advancing environmental justice, and driving the creation of good-paying union jobs. By addressing long-overdue improvements and strengthening our resilience to the changing climate, this investment in our communities across the country is growing the economy sustainably and equitably so everyone gets ahead for decades to come.




BIL provides a total of \$1,458,000,000 over five years (Fiscal Year (FY) 2022 through FY 2026) for Interior’s Wildland Fire Management. The funding is “no year” funding, which means that it is available until expended. However, Congress made available specific amounts in each of the five years. For FY 2022, \$407.6 million was made available, and for FY 2023, \$262.6 million was made available. For each of the years 2024-2026, an additional \$262.6 million will become available to Interior.




The BIL funding for Interior’s Wildland Fire Management is intended to strengthen the resilience of communities and ecosystems to the threat of wildfire by making historic investments in the wildland fire workforce; forest and rangeland restoration; hazardous fuels management; science, technology and equipment; and post-wildfire restoration activities. For more information on BIL and Interior’s Wildland Fire Management, see the “Program Activities” and “Other Exhibits” sections of this justification. Specifically, Interior provides the FY 2024 spend plan for BIL Wildland Fire Management activities in the “Other Exhibits” section.

Wildland Fire Management Program & Budget Overview

Interior’s Wildland Fire Management program is committed to addressing the effects of climate change and wildfires on public health, resources, and communities. Interior and its partners work to restore and maintain resilient landscapes, protect lives and properties, create fire-adapted communities, and ensure safe and effective responses to wildfires. The Department strives to achieve a cost-effective, technically sound, and evidence-based wildland fire management program that safely meets resource management goals. Interior makes every effort to minimize the costs of wildfire response and the damage to communities, nature, and cultural resources in accordance with the Department’s strategic goals.

Interior uses the **Wildland Fire Management account** to fund the Administration’s priorities for wildland fire management and increasing the country’s resilience to the adverse effects of climate change. Appropriations for the Wildland Fire Management account fund the following program activities and subactivities of the Other Operations activity:

Program Activity		Description
	Preparedness	Provides an integrated and coordinated framework for wildfire response by funding core firefighting resources and managing the capacity of assets and operations to respond to fire activities across the United States.
	Suppression Operations	Comprises the range of actions taken to directly extinguish wildfires, prevent the movement and growth of unwanted fire, and collaboratively manage wildfires.
	Fuels Management	Represents a strategic investment in actively managing vegetation to reduce the intensity, severity, or negative effects of wildfire through wildfire hazard reduction designed to protect values at risk. Fuels management practices include prescribed fires and mechanical, chemical, and biological treatments.

Subactivities (Other Operations)		Description
	Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR)	Supports efforts to repair or improve burned landscapes unlikely to recover without human assistance.
	Facilities Construction and Maintenance	Provides for the infrastructure used to support firefighters, safeguard the public, and improve Interior’s capability to protect values at risk from damage by wildfire.
	Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP)	Program through which USDA and Interior fund dedicated wildland fire research and science to inform wildland fire management policies and decisions at local, regional, and national levels.

Through appropriations to the **Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund account**, Congress makes available to Interior additional funding for emergency wildfire response and suppression when Suppression Operations funding in the Wildland Fire Management account is inadequate to meet the needs. Unobligated balances of funding in the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund carry forward into the next year.

2024 Budget Request

Table 1: Summary Budget Table for Interior’s Wildland Fire Management
(Budget Authority and Personnel Level)

Budget Authority (Dollars in Thousands)	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted/A	2024 Request
Current, Wildland Fire Management (14X1125)/ A	1,026,097	663,786	1,325,886
Total, Transfers from Reserve Fund (14X0130)/ B	0	0	0
Net Other Transfers/ C	2,500	0	0
Total Current, Wildland Fire Management (with Transfers) without Supplemental Funding	1,028,597	663,786	1,325,886
Supplemental Funding/ A, D	507,600	766,600	262,600
Supplemental Funding Transfers (BIL)/ C	-4,138	-1,313	-1,313
Total Current, Wildland Fire Management (with Transfers) with Supplemental Funding	1,532,059	1,429,073	1,587,173
Current, Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund (14X1130)	330,000	340,000	350,000
Total Current, Reserve Fund (with Transfers)	330,000	340,000	350,000

Budget Authority (Dollars in Thousands)	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted/A	2024 Request
Total Current, Wildland Fire Management Program/ A	1,862,059	1,769,073	1,937,173

Personnel Level

Budget Authority	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted/A	2024 Request
Full-Time Equivalent Employees (FTE)/ E - Total Current with Supplemental Funding, including Reimbursable FTE	3,755	3,910	4,280

A/ The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, provided \$504.0 million in disaster relief supplement appropriations for Suppression Operations (\$458.7 million) and Preparedness (\$45.3 million). Within this total, \$429.0 million (including \$383.7 million for Suppression and \$45.3 million for Preparedness) is typically provided as base funding through regular appropriations. The 2024 budget is compared to a “comparable” level for 2023 that includes this \$429.0 million. The 2024 request restores base appropriations for this \$429.0 million (\$383.7 million for Suppression and \$45.3 million for Preparedness).

B/ During FY 2022, a total of \$282.0 million in FY 2021 appropriations was transferred from the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund to the Wildland Fire Management account, yielding a total FY 2022 actual funding level of \$1,306,459,000. The table does not show this amount for transfers because the transferred funding was not from appropriations for FY 2022. During FY 2022, none of the FY 2022 appropriation for the reserve fund was transferred to the Wildland Fire Management account. Currently, the balance in the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund is \$670,000,000, including FY 2022 and FY 2023 appropriations.

C/ For FY 2022, the transfer amounts reflect the amount of funding received from the USDA Forest Service (\$2.5 million) for interagency projects, the funding the Wildland Fire Management program was required by BIL to transfer directly to Interior’s Office of Inspector General (\$2.038 million), and BIL funding the Wildland Fire Management program transferred to FWS’s Ecological Services office (\$2.1 million) for program support. For FY 2023 and FY 2024, the amounts reflect the funding the Wildland Fire Management program is required by BIL to transfer directly to Interior’s Office of Inspector General.

D/ Supplemental funding in FY 2022 includes \$100.0 million provided for Disaster Relief (for Fuels Management and Burned Area Rehabilitation) and \$407.6 million provided through BIL. Supplemental funding for FY 2023 includes amounts provided for Disaster Relief (\$504.0 million, including \$429.0 million for Suppression Operations and Preparedness typically provided through regular appropriations and \$75.0 million in additional funding for Suppression Operations) and through BIL (\$262.6 million).

E/ Except as indicated otherwise, all references to “FTE” in this justification are federal Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) employee levels. This justification also includes some estimates of tribal FTE personnel. The FTE amounts in this table include both direct allocated and reimbursable FTE employees, which explains the difference from the FTE levels displayed in Table 3: Summary of Requirements, on page 18, and elsewhere in this justification.

The 2024 budget request for Interior’s Wildland Fire Management program is nearly \$1.7 billion, which is \$243.1 million or 17.0 percent above the comparable 2023 enacted level. The request includes \$1.3 billion for the Wildland Fire Management account (an increase of \$233.1 million or 21.3 percent above the comparable 2023 enacted level) and \$350.0 million for the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund (an increase of \$10.0 million or 2.9 percent above the 2023 enacted level). In addition to funding pay increases for federal and tribal wildland firefighters, the 2024 budget funds increases in federal and tribal firefighting personnel capacity. The 2024 budget’s federal Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) personnel level is 4,080, or 370 above the 2023 enacted level, and the tribal FTE personnel estimate is 813, or 55 above the 2023 enacted level.

The President's 2024 budget, featuring the suite of workforce reforms described below, will transform interagency Wildland Fire Management by improving recruitment and retention of wildland firefighters and laying the foundation for further advancements. The Administration looks forward to working with Congress to enact the important legislation and the requested funds needed to implement these reforms for FY 2024.

Workforce Reform – Pay Increases for Firefighters and Other Wildland Fire Personnel

The President's 2024 budget proposes significant reforms to increase the nation's investments in the wildland fire management workforce. The cornerstone of these long-term reforms is a permanent increase in pay. The Administration proposes legislation to:

- Establish a special base rate salary table for wildland firefighters,
- Create a new premium pay category that provides some additional compensation for all hours a wildland fire responder is mobilized on an incident, and
- Establish a streamlined pay cap that provides waiver authority to the Secretary using specific criteria.

The budget includes an increase of \$72.0 million, including \$47.7 million in Preparedness and \$24.3 million in Fuels Management, to cover the costs of the new special base rate table for federal firefighters and similar pay increases for tribal firefighters (see the "Preparedness," "Fuels Management," and "Suppression Operations" sections of this justification). These proposals build upon the historic reforms in BIL to ensure that wildland fire personnel receive the enhanced support they need to meet evolving mission demands, as both the frequency and intensity of catastrophic wildfires are expected to continue to increase due to climate change. Enacting these reforms is essential to providing wildland firefighters a more competitive and equitable wage, helping prevent burnout and fatigue, and improving recruitment and retention.

The special base rate table will apply to all federal wildland firefighters and will raise base pay at all grades on a sliding scale. For example, entry-level firefighters at grade GS-3 will receive a pay increase of 36 percent, and the most senior firefighters, at grades GS-14 and GS-15, will receive an increase of 3.0 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively. The proposed premium pay will apply to all federal wildland fire incident responders, with standardized duty days and compensation for all hours they are mobilized on an incident. Although these pay reforms are for federal personnel, the budget also provides funding for similar pay increases to tribal wildland fire personnel.

Workforce Reform – Increased Support for Wildland Firefighters' Health and Well-Being

The 2024 budget also supports additional reforms to address other significant challenges associated with recruiting and retaining wildland firefighters. The President's budget includes an increase of \$10.0 million for Interior (and another \$10.0 million for USDA) to establish a comprehensive joint Interior-USDA program to enhance wildland firefighters' mental and physical health and well-being (see the "Preparedness" section of this justification). These efforts will help to better meet firefighters' needs and build longevity to sustain the workforce in a demanding work environment by managing critical incident stress and preemptive stress.

Workforce Reform – Increased Housing for Wildland Fire Personnel

The 2024 budget also increases funding for Facilities Construction and Maintenance by \$22.0 million to repair, renovate, modernize, and construct housing for personnel (see the “Facilities Construction and Maintenance” section of this justification). These funds will go a long way toward addressing the problem of inadequate or unaffordable housing facing many wildland firefighters working in certain geographic locations.

Workforce Reform – Expanded Capacity to Fight Wildfires

The budget includes an increase of \$45.0 million in Preparedness to increase staffing by an estimated 325 federal and 55 tribal FTE. Interior will use these funds to continue its transformation and move toward a more permanent workforce for wildland fire management. The budget will help ensure that the federal government and tribal nations can effectively meet the demands of wildland fire year-round while providing individual firefighters more opportunities for much-needed rest, recuperation, training, and professional development.

Strengthening Preparedness and Tribal Fuels Management

In addition to the workforce reforms, the President’s 2024 budget will further improve wildland fire preparedness by increasing aviation contracts and uncrewed aerial systems support by \$20.0 million and 25 federal FTE. Further, the budget increases program management for incident support by \$18.3 million and 20 federal FTE (see the “Preparedness” section of this justification). In addition, the 2024 budget increases Fuels Management funding for tribal contract and administrative support and Reserved Treaty Rights Lands projects by \$9.0 million (see the “Fuels Management” section of this justification).

Investing in the Future: FWS Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program



Marie Fujioka, a FWS Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program participant, on a recent prescribed fire assignment. (Photo by FWS.)

Because wildfire activity is starting earlier and lasting longer, with more extreme wildfires burning across the landscape, wildland firefighting has shifted from a seasonal job to a year-round profession. These days, wildland firefighters are needed throughout the year to tackle not only wildfire suppression but to conduct wildfire risk reduction projects in the fall, winter, and spring.

The FWS Wildland Fire Apprenticeship Program, builds future wildland fire leaders through a mix of classroom education and on-the-job training. An accredited U.S. Department of Labor apprenticeship program, it sends entry-level firefighters to an academy where they become well-rounded wildland fire leaders and practitioners. Students experience a diverse learning environment through on-the-job training as they participate in various wildland fire positions. The apprentices have up to four years to complete the program and, upon completion, they are converted to fulltime permanent positions.

The program allows FWS to foster a workforce with extensive wildland fire management knowledge and skills, including leaders who understand wildland fire management from the ground up. This investment allows FWS to foster meaningful wildland fire careers and retain employees who enjoy their jobs and passionately engage in wildland fire management.

Through its apprenticeship program, the FWS has hired 28 wildland fire staff in one year. It plans to continue the program as part of its ongoing efforts to build future wildland fire management leaders and a diverse, well-rounded workforce.

Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act Report

The Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act (GAO-IG Act, Public Law 115-414) enacted January 3, 2019, requires that federal agencies report the status of each open audit recommendation issued more than one year prior to the submission of the agency's annual budget justification to Congress. The Act requires agencies to include the current target completion date, implementation status, and any discrepancies on closure determinations.

The Department of the Interior leadership takes audit follow-up very seriously and considers our external auditors—including the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and Interior's Office of Inspector General (OIG)—to be valued partners not only in improving the Department's management and compliance obligations but also in enhancing its programmatic and administrative operations. As good stewards of taxpayer resources, the Department applies cost-benefit analysis and enterprise risk management principles in decisions about implementing auditors' recommendations. The Department's GAO-IG Act Report will be available at the following link: <https://www.doi.gov/cj>.

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Budget Summary Tables

Budget at a Glance

Table 2: Wildland Fire Management Budget at a Glance
(Dollars in Thousands)

Appropriation: Wildland Fire Management (14X1125)	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted/ A	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes/ A (+/-)	2024 Request
Preparedness, Total/ A	370,543	381,816	+24,328	+0	+186,343	592,487
<i>Preparedness: Restore Base Appropriations/ A</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+45,343]	0
<i>Preparedness: Increase Firefighters' Compensation</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+47,656]	0
<i>Preparedness: Increase Staffing and Continue Workforce Transformation</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+45,000]	0
<i>Preparedness: Invest in Health and Well-Being</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+10,000]	0
<i>Preparedness: Increase Aviation Contract and Uncrewed Aerial Systems Support</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+20,000]	0
<i>Preparedness: Increase Program Management for Incident Support</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+18,344]	0
Suppression Operations, Total/ A	383,657	0	+0	+0	+383,657	383,657
<i>Suppression Operations: Restore Base Appropriations/ A</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+383,657]	0
Fuels Management, Total	227,000	247,000	+12,928	+0	+33,344	293,272
<i>Fuels Management: Increase Firefighters' Compensation</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+24,344]	0
<i>Fuels Management: Increase Tribal Contract Support and Reserved Treaty Rights Lands Projects</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+9,000]	0

Other Operations, Total	44,897	34,970	+0	+0	+21,500	56,470
Other Operations: Burned Area Rehabilitation	22,470	20,470	+0	+0	+0	20,470
Other Operations: Facilities Construction and Maintenance	18,427	10,000	+0	+0	+22,000	32,000
<i>Facilities: Increase Housing for Personnel</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[+22,000]	0
Other Operations: Joint Fire Science Program	4,000	4,500	+0	+0	-500	4,000
<i>Joint Fire Science Program: Wildland Fire Research</i>	0	0	+0	+0	[-500]	0
TOTAL: Wildland Fire Management/ A	1,026,097	663,786	+37,256	+0	+624,844	1,325,886
<i>Wildland Fire Management: Net Other Transfers/ B</i>	2,500	0	+0	+0	+0	0
TOTAL: Wildland Fire Management (with Transfers) without Supplemental Funding, Total/ A, C	1,028,597	663,786	+37,256	+0	+624,844	1,325,886
<i>Supplemental Funding: Disaster Relief/ A</i>	100,000	504,000	+0	+0	-504,000	0
<i>Supplemental Funding: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)</i>	407,600	262,600	+0	+0	+0	262,600
<i>Supplemental Funding: Transfers (BIL)/ B</i>	-4,138	-1,313	+0	+0	+0	-1,313
TOTAL: Wildland Fire Management (with Transfers) with Supplemental	1,532,059	1,429,073	+37,256	+0	+120,844	1,587,173
Appropriation: Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund (14X0130)						
Suppression Operations, Total	330,000	340,000	+0	+0	+10,000	350,000
TOTAL: Wildland Fire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund/ C	330,000	340,000	+0	+0	+10,000	350,000
TOTAL, ALL DEPARTMENTWIDE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT/ A	1,862,059	1,769,073	+37,256	+0	+130,844	1,937,173

A/ The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, provided \$504.0 million in disaster relief supplement appropriations for Suppression Operations (\$458.7 million) and Preparedness (\$45.3 million). Within this total, \$429.0 million (including \$383.7 million for Suppression and \$45.3 million for Preparedness) is typically provided as base funding through regular appropriations. The 2024 budget is compared to a “comparable” level for 2023 that includes this \$429.0 million. The 2024 request restores base appropriations for this \$429.0 million (\$383.7 million for Suppression and \$45.3 million for Preparedness).

B/ The FY 2022 transfer amounts reflect the amount of funding received from the USDA Forest Service (\$2.5 million) for interagency projects; the funding the Wildland Fire Management program was required by BIL to transfer directly to Interior's Office of Inspector General (\$2.038 million); and BIL funding Interior's Wildland Fire Management program transferred to FWS's Ecological Services office (\$2.1 million) for program support. For FY 2023 and FY 2024, the amounts reflect the funding the Wildland Fire Management program is required by BIL to transfer directly to Interior's Office of Inspector General.

C/ During FY 2022, \$282.0 million in FY 2021 appropriations was transferred from the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund to the Wildland Fire Management account, yielding a total FY 2022 actual funding level of \$1,306,459,000. The table does not show this amount for transfers because the transferred funding was not from appropriations for FY 2022. During FY 2022, none of the FY 2022 appropriation for the reserve fund was transferred to the Wildland Fire Management account. Currently, the unobligated balance in the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund is \$670,000,000, including FY 2022 and FY 2023 appropriations.

Summary of Requirements

Table 3: Summary of Requirements, Wildland Fire Management
(Dollars in Thousands)

ACCOUNT/Activity/Subactivity	2022 Actual	2022 Enacted Total FTE	2023 Enacted/ A	2023 Enacted FTE	2024 Request Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Request Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Request Program Changes/ A (+/-)	2024 Request Program Changes (+/-) FTE	2024 Request	2024 Request FTE	2024 Request TOTAL Change from 2023 (+/-)
WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT	370,543	2,053	381,816	\$2,173	+24,328	+0	+186,343	+370	592,487	2,543	+210,671
Preparedness/ A											
Total, Preparedness/ A	370,543	2,053	381,816	2,173	+24,328	+0	+186,343	+370	592,487	2,543	+210,671
Suppression Operations/ A	383,657	346	0	346	+0	+0	+383,657	+0	383,657	346	+383,657
Total, Suppression Operations/ A	383,657	346	0	346	+0	+0	+383,657	+0	383,657	346	+383,657
Fuels Management	227,000	1,091	247,000	1,128	+12,928	+0	+33,344	+0	293,272	1,128	+46,272
Total, Fuels Management	227,000	1,091	247,000	1,128	+12,928	+0	+33,344	+0	293,272	1,128	+46,272
Other Operations: Burned Area Rehabilitation	22,470	59	20,470	59	+0	+0	+0	+0	20,470	59	+0
Other Operations: Facilities Construction and Maintenance	18,427	1	10,000	1	+0	+0	+22,000	+0	32,000	1	+22,000
Other Operations: Joint Fire Science Program	4,000	3	4,500	3	+0	+0	-500	+0	4,000	3	-500
Total, Other Operations	44,897	63	34,970	63	+0	+0	+21,500	+0	56,470	63	+21,500
TOTAL, WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT WITHOUT SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING/ A	1,026,097	3,553	663,786	3,710	+37,256	+0	+624,844	+370	1,325,886	4,080	+662,100
Net Other Transfers/ B	2,500	0	0	0	+0	+0	+0	+0	0	0	+0
TOTAL, WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT (WITH TRANSFERS) WITHOUT SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING/ A	1,028,597	3,553	663,786	3,710	+37,256	+0	+624,844	+370	1,325,886	4,080	+662,100
Supplemental Funding: Disaster Relief/ A	100,000	0	504,000	0	+0	+0	-504,000	+0	0	0	-504,000
Supplemental Funding: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL)	407,600	0	262,600	0	+0	+0	+0	+0	262,600	0	+0
Supplemental Funding: Transfers (BIL)/ B	-4,138	0	-1,313	0	+0	+0	+0	+0	-1,313	0	+0

ACCOUNT/Activity/Subactivity	2022 Actual	2022 Enacted Total FTE	2023 Enacted/ A	2023 Enacted FTE	2024 Request Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Request Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Request Program Changes/ A (+/-)	2024 Request Program Changes (+/-) FTE	2024 Request	2024 Request FTE	2024 Request TOTAL Change from 2023 (+/-)
TOTAL, WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT (WITH TRANSFERS) WITH SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING	1,532,059	3,553	1,429,073	3,710	+37,256	+0	+120,844	+370	1,587,173	4,080	+158,100
WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS RESERVE FUND Suppression Operations/ C	330,000	0	340,000	0	+0	+0	+10,000	+0	350,000	0	+10,000
TOTAL, WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS RESERVE FUND/ C	330,000	0	340,000	0	+0	+0	+10,000	+0	350,000	0	+10,000

A/ The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, provided \$504.0 million in disaster relief supplement appropriations for Suppression Operations (\$458.7 million) and Preparedness (\$45.3 million). Within this total, \$429.0 million (including \$383.7 million for Suppression and \$45.3 million for Preparedness) is typically provided as base funding through regular appropriations. The 2024 budget is compared to a “comparable” level for 2023 that includes this \$429.0 million. The 2024 request restores base appropriations for this \$429.0 million (\$383.7 million for Suppression and \$45.3 million for Preparedness).

B/ The FY 2022 transfer amounts reflect the amount of funding received from the USDA Forest Service (\$2.5 million) for interagency projects; the funding the Wildland Fire Management program was required by BIL to transfer directly to Interior’s Office of Inspector General (OIG, \$2.038 million); and BIL funding Interior’s Wildland Fire Management program transferred to FWS’s Ecological Services office (\$2.1 million) for program support. For FY 2023 and FY 2024, the amounts reflect the funding the Wildland Fire Management program is required by BIL to transfer directly to OIG.

C/ During FY 2022, \$282.0 million in FY 2021 appropriations was transferred from the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund to the Wildland Fire Management account, yielding a total FY 2022 actual funding level of \$1,306,459,000. The table does not show this amount for transfers because the transferred funding was not from appropriations for FY 2022. During FY 2022, none of the FY 2022 appropriation for the reserve fund was transferred to the Wildland Fire Management account. Currently, the unobligated balance in the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund is \$670,000,000, including FY 2022 and FY 2023 appropriations.

Note: The federal FTE employee amounts in this table do not include reimbursable FTE, which explains the difference from the FTE displayed in the Budget Summary table on page 8.

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Program Activities

The 2024 budget request for Interior’s Wildland Fire Management program—including both the Wildland Fire Management account and the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund—is \$1,675,886,000 and 4,080 direct and allocated federal FTE employees, which are increases of +\$243,100,000 (+17.0 percent) and +370 FTE (+10.0 percent) above the comparable 2023 enacted levels, respectively. Within these totals:

- The request for the Wildland Fire Management account is \$1,325,886,000 and 4,080 federal FTE, which are increases of +\$233,100,000 (+21.3 percent) and +370 FTE (+10.0 percent) above the comparable 2023 enacted levels, respectively. The increase above the comparable 2023 enacted level includes \$37,256,000 for fixed costs. The budget also will increase tribal FTE personnel by an estimated 55 above the 2023 enacted level, to a total of 813 for 2024.
- The request for the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund is \$350,000,000 and 0 FTE, which is an increase of +\$10,000,000 (+2.9 percent) above the 2023 enacted level.

The President’s 2024 budget proposes significant reforms to increase the nation’s investments in the wildland fire management workforce. The cornerstone of these long-term reforms is a permanent increase in pay. The Administration proposes legislation to establish a special base rate salary table for wildland firefighters, create a new premium pay category that provides some additional compensation for all hours a wildland fire responder is mobilized on an incident, and establish a streamlined pay cap that provides waiver authority to the Secretary using specific criteria. The budget funds these federal pay reforms and similar pay increases for tribal personnel. These proposals build upon the historic reforms in BIL to ensure that wildland fire personnel receive the enhanced support they need to meet evolving mission demands, as both the frequency and intensity of catastrophic wildfires are expected to increase due to climate change.

Wildland Fire Management Appropriation

Preparedness (\$592,487,000/2,543 FTE)

The 2024 budget request provides \$592.5 million for Preparedness, an increase of +\$210.7 million (+55.2 percent) above the level of regular, or base, appropriations for 2023, or +\$165.3 million (+38.7 percent) after including funding that is typically appropriated as base funding but was appropriated as disaster relief supplemental funding for FY 2023 (\$45.3 million). The budget provides +\$24.3 million more than the 2023 enacted level for fixed costs and +\$186.3 million more than the 2023 enacted level for program changes, including +\$45.3 million to restore base appropriations. The request provides:

- +\$47.7 million to increase federal and tribal firefighters’ compensation,
- +\$45.0 million to increase staffing and continue workforce transformation (supporting increases of +325 federal FTE and +55 tribal FTE above the comparable 2023 enacted levels, to totals of 2,543 federal and 330 tribal FTE),
- +\$10.0 million to increase investments in wildland fire personnel’s health and well-being,

- +\$20.0 million and +25 federal FTE to increase aviation contract and uncrewed aerial systems support, and
- +\$18.3 million and +20 federal FTE to increase program management for incident support.

Suppression Operations (\$383,657,000/346 FTE)

The 2024 budget request provides \$383.7 million for Suppression Operations. The budget funds Suppression Operations at the ten-year average of suppression obligations as reported in the 2015 budget, in accordance with Division O of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P. L. 115-141). This level is +\$383.7 million more than the base appropriation for Suppression Operations for 2023 but equal to the level provided for by P.L. 115-141. Congress appropriated 2023 funds for Suppression Operations through the disaster relief supplemental. The request provides funding for 346 federal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted level. (See also the “Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund,” below.)

Fuels Management (\$293,272,000/1,128 FTE)

The 2024 budget request provides \$293.3 million for Fuels Management, an increase of +\$46.3 million (+18.7 percent) above the 2023 enacted level. The budget provides +\$12.9 million for fixed costs, +\$24.3 million to increase federal and tribal firefighters’ compensation, and +\$9.0 million to increase tribal contract and administrative support and Reserved Treaty Rights Lands projects. The request provides funding for 1,128 federal FTE and 415 tribal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted levels.

Burned Area Rehabilitation (\$20,470,000/59 FTE)

The 2024 budget request provides \$20.5 million for Burned Area Rehabilitation, the same as the 2023 enacted level. Interior will use the funds to promote resilience to climate change in areas adjacent to underrepresented communities, tribal nations, and elsewhere by reducing the long-term negative effects of wildfires and increasing the resiliency of landscapes and ecosystems in areas that are unlikely to recover on their own. The request provides funding for 59 federal FTE and 68 tribal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted levels.

Facilities Construction and Maintenance (\$32,000,000/1 FTE)

The 2024 budget request provides \$32.0 million for Facilities Construction and Maintenance, an increase of +\$22.0 million above the 2023 enacted level. The increased funding will allow Interior to advance its efforts to repair, renovate, and construct housing for personnel. These funds will go a long way toward addressing the problem of inadequate or unaffordable housing facing many wildland firefighters working in certain geographic locations. The request provides funding for 1 federal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted level.

Joint Fire Science Program (\$4,000,000/3 FTE)

The 2024 budget request provides \$4.0 million for the Joint Fire Science Program. Interior and USDA Forest Service jointly fund and administer the program, which funds high-priority research studies to ensure that climate change adaptation and resilience are integrated throughout the Wildland Fire Management program. The request provides funding for 3 federal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted level.

Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund Appropriation

Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund (\$350,000,000/0 FTE)

The 2024 budget request increases funding for the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund by +\$10.0 million (+2.9 percent) above the 2023 enacted level. These resources are available to Interior's Wildland Fire Management program for emergency wildfire response and suppression when Suppression Operations funding provided in the Wildland Fire Management account is inadequate to meet the needs. Reserve funding that is not needed for one year carries forward into the next year.

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PREPAREDNESS



The Preparedness activity provides an integrated and coordinated framework for wildfire response. Preparedness funds the core firefighting resources, assets, and operations that Interior uses to respond to fire activities across the United States.

Activity: Preparedness
Subactivity: Preparedness

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted/ A	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes/ A (+/-)	2024 Request	Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)
Dollars <i>(in Thousands)/ A</i>	370,543	381,816	+24,328	+0	+186,343	592,487	+210,671
<i>FTE/ B</i>	2,053	2,173	+0	+0	+370	2,543	+370
<i>Tribal FTE</i>	220	275	+0	+0	+55	330	+55

A/ In addition to the 2023 Enacted level of funding displayed in this table, the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, provided \$45,343,000 in emergency disaster relief appropriations. The 2024 budget proposes to restore this funding as base appropriations.

B/ Direct and allocated federal FTE

Program Changes

The 2024 budget request provides \$592,487,000 for Preparedness, a total program change of +\$186.3 million above the level of regular, or base, appropriations for 2023, or +\$141.0 million after including 2023 disaster relief supplemental funding. The budget’s program changes for Preparedness total \$186.3 million. The request provides funding for 2,543 federal FTE (+370 above the 2023 level) and 330 tribal FTE (+55 above the 2023 level).

Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Preparedness

Program Changes	Dollars in Thousands	FTE/ A
Restore Base Appropriations	+45,343	+0
Increase Firefighters’ Compensation	+47,656	+0
Increase Staffing and Continue Workforce Transformation	+45,000	+325
Invest in Health and Well-Being	+10,000	+0

Program Changes	Dollars in Thousands	FTE/ A
Increase Aviation Contract and Uncrewed Aerial Systems Support	+20,000	+25
Increase Program Management for Incident Support	+18,344	+20
TOTAL Program Changes	+186,343	+370

A/ Direct and allocated federal FTE; estimates of tribal FTE are included elsewhere in this justification.

- **Restore Base Appropriations** (+45,343,000/+0 FTE/+0 tribal FTE) – The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, (P.L. 117-328) reflected a significant shift of funding for Interior’s Wildland Fire Management. The law shifted \$45.3 million in Preparedness funding from regular discretionary appropriations to one-time emergency disaster relief appropriations. The 2024 budget restores base funding for Preparedness to regular appropriations.
- **Increase Firefighters’ Compensation** (+\$47,656,000/+0 FTE/+0 tribal FTE) – The 2024 budget request increases funding for federal and tribal wildland firefighters’ pay by a total of \$72.0 million, including \$47.7 million in Preparedness (see also the “Suppression Operations” and “Fuels Management” sections of this justification). These pay increases build on the President’s 2021 compensation increases for wildland firefighters and the BIL special pay supplements for federal firefighters in 2022 and 2023 with reforms to provide permanent increases in pay for wildland firefighters. The federal government must provide a level of pay that is competitive with the compensation provided by state, local, and private employers. Otherwise, firefighting capacity-building goals will be undermined as the federal government hires and trains firefighters who are subsequently lured away to higher-paying jobs.

To implement permanent pay increases for federal wildland personnel, the Administration proposes legislation to:

- Establish a special base rate salary table for wildland firefighters,
- Create a new premium pay category that provides some additional compensation for all hours a wildland fire responder is mobilized on an incident, and
- Establish a streamlined pay cap that provides waiver authority to the Secretary using specific criteria.

The budget funds these federal pay reforms and similar pay increases for tribal personnel. These proposals build upon the historic reforms in BIL to ensure that wildland fire personnel receive the enhanced support they need to meet evolving mission demands, as both the frequency and intensity of catastrophic wildfires are expected to continue to increase due to climate change. Enacting these reforms is essential to meet the challenges posed by longer and more intense fire seasons while providing wildland firefighters a more competitive and equitable wage, helping prevent burnout and fatigue, and improving recruitment and retention.

The special base rate table will apply to all federal wildland firefighters and will raise base pay at all grades on a sliding scale. For example, entry-level firefighters at grade GS-3 will receive a pay increase of 36 percent, and the most senior firefighters, at grades GS-14 and GS-15, will receive an increase of 3.0 percent and 1.5 percent, respectively. The proposed premium pay will apply to all federal wildland fire incident responders, with standardized duty days and compensation for all hours

they are mobilized on an incident. Although these pay reforms are for federal personnel, the budget also provides funding for similar pay increases for tribal wildland fire personnel.

- **Increase Staffing and Continue Workforce Transformation** (+\$45,000,000/+325 FTE/+55 tribal FTE) – The 2024 budget request increases Preparedness firefighting capacity by 325 federal FTE and 55 tribal FTE to ensure Interior is prepared to respond to the growing threat of wildfires timely and effectively. The budget will allow Interior to build on the workforce transformation begun in 2021 to increase the number of permanent positions and continue developing a professional, year-round wildland fire workforce to meet the demands of longer, larger, costlier, and more complex wildfires. Further, the expanded personnel capacity will allow firefighters to have more time for rest and recuperation after being mobilized on incidents and more time for training and professional development.
- **Invest in Health and Well-Being** (+\$10,000,000/+0 FTE/+0 tribal FTE) – The 2024 budget request increases Preparedness funding by \$10.0 million for Interior to work with USDA to implement a comprehensive joint Interior-USDA program to enhance firefighters’ mental and physical health and well-being. These efforts will help better meet firefighters’ needs and build longevity to sustain the workforce in a demanding work environment by managing critical incident stress and preemptive stress. (The request for USDA also provides \$10.0 million for this joint program.)
- **Increase Aviation Contract and Uncrewed Aerial Systems Support** (+\$20,000,000/+25 FTE/+0 tribal FTE) – The 2024 budget request provides an increase of \$20.0 million for Interior’s investments in aviation contracts and uncrewed aerial systems (UAS) that support wildland fire management. Interior will use a portion of this funding to increase the length of exclusive-use availability contracts. These contracts reduce the need for “call-when-needed” contracts, which provide less assurance that resources will be available for suppression operations and are more costly over the long run. In addition, Interior will use the requested funding to expand its UAS program. Program expansion will include acquiring additional fleet and equipment and hiring personnel for program operations and leadership. In 2024, Interior will target more of these new investments on increasing UAS fleet and equipment. Over time, Interior expects the balance to shift more toward further expanding the number of personnel and operational capacity. The request will increase Preparedness personnel by +25 federal FTE above the 2023 level.
- **Increase Program Management for Incident Support** (+\$18,344,000/+20 FTE/+0 tribal FTE) – The 2024 budget provides an increase of \$18.3 million for program management for incident support. This request is consistent with recommendations from the President’s Council of Advisors on Science and Technology in its *Report to the President Modernizing Wildland Firefighting to Protect Our Firefighters*, released in February 2023. Interior will use a portion of the requested increase to enhance centralized management and oversight of information technology (IT) that supports wildland fire management, including the preparation and deployment of IT equipment to incident management teams during operational assignments. The request will support Interior’s acquisition and deployment of new and emerging technologies, maintenance of existing technology, and prioritization of security. Further, Interior will use a portion of the request to increase wildfire intelligence and provide real-time fire environment analysis and decision support. For example, the request will facilitate improved wildfire weather modeling to better anticipate and monitor both wildfires and prescribed fires. The request will increase personnel by +20 federal FTE above the 2023 level.

Advancing Technology to Support Wildland Fire Mitigation and Response



Wildland firefighters stand together looking down at two mobile devices. A FirstNet truck is behind them with a mobile satellite array deployed. (Photo by Interior.)

Technology is now interwoven into nearly every facet of forest and rangeland management, including wildland fire mitigation and response. From satellites to mobile devices and applications designed for wildfire personnel, technology is improving the strategic planning of wildfire mitigation efforts, enabling a more effective response to wildfires, improving firefighter safety, and providing real-time information for the public.

At the Interior Department, we are equipping wildland fire personnel with handheld and mobile devices and bringing networks into the remote areas where they operate. In collaboration with FirstNet and other service providers, we are expanding high-speed broadband for use in wildland fire operations in remote locations that currently lack access. We are piloting satellite-based connectivity on wildfire incidents through Starlink. We are also using edge computing to maintain connectivity in areas with low bandwidth by essentially creating a data center at the incident. These efforts ensure more fire response personnel operating in remote locations have access to essential, real-time data and modeling to inform their decisions.

Advances in technology are also improving firefighter safety. For example, the implementation of remote tracking systems is enabling wildland fire managers and dispatchers to view the locations of vehicles and personnel in real time, improving situational awareness and rapid decision-making.

As we continue to experience more frequent, extreme wildfires across the country, these efforts will advance the Interior Department's work to detect wildfires early, improve firefighter safety, and expand capacity to respond to wildfires at a local level.

Program Overview

The Preparedness activity provides for the firefighting resources and assets to protect the public, communities, watersheds, and natural and cultural resources from the detrimental effects of wildfires. Through the interagency Wildland Fire Management program, Interior and its partners manage a fire response framework for efficient wildfire response locally, regionally, and nationally. As conditions change throughout the year and wildfire activity increases in specific locations, Interior and its partners strategically move firefighting resources, including equipment and people, to locations where the risks are highest and additional resources are needed.

Most importantly, the Preparedness activity funds firefighters. It supports firefighting assets such as aviation resources, engines, and equipment, along with services that provide the capacity to fight wildfires safely and effectively. Interior shares these resources and assets at all levels of government across the country. Through national interagency coordination and collaboration, assets are available at the national, regional, tribal, or local level depending on current need. Maximizing the mobility of resources increases efficiency by lowering costs and reducing the potential for duplicating the deployment of valuable firefighting assets.

Interior strives to increase efficiencies and partnerships to maintain core capabilities. For example, increasing partnerships and collaboration helps to reduce administrative and operational redundancy through the use of combined positions and shared contracts. Cooperative protection agreements with other federal agencies, states, self-governing tribal nations, and local communities—along with contracts with private firms—provide protection, facilitate the sharing of resources, and streamline work. These agreements promote safe and rapid response, help minimize overall protection costs for all parties, and foster relationships essential to the development of a cohesive and coordinated response to manage wildfires. This coordination is especially important when wildfires burn across land ownerships, jurisdictions, and administrative boundaries.

Program Activities

The 2024 budget request continues to support an interoperable approach to Preparedness that increases efficiencies, supports partnerships, and maintains core capabilities. Preparedness efforts help reduce the risk of large wildfire potential and lower the cost of more intensive wildfire response.

The 2024 budget request for Preparedness:

- Supports 2,543 federal FTE (+370 more than the 2023 level) who make up Interior's core firefighting capacity—to increase preparedness to respond to the growing threat from wildfires and climate change;
- Funds 330 tribal FTE (+55 more than the 2023 level);
- Increases firefighters' compensation, building on the President's 2021 compensation increases for wildland firefighters and BIL special pay supplements for federal firefighters in 2022 and 2023;

- Increases the number of firefighters and continues the workforce transformation to a more permanent workforce, which Interior began in 2021 and which BIL supports;
- Provides dedicated funding to expand Interior’s efforts, working with USDA, to enhance the physical and mental health and well-being of wildland fire personnel;
- Increases investments in exclusive-use contracts for aviation that supports wildland fire management and in the UAS fleet and staffing;
- Provides more funding for program management for responding to wildfire incidents;
- Funds other core firefighting resources and operations necessary to respond to wildfire activity across the United States, including fire engines, planes, helicopters, and other firefighting equipment and resources; as well as support personnel and operations of the National Interagency Fire Center, the National Interagency Coordination Center, and Predictive Services (see also Tables 4, 5, and 6, below); and
- Maintains the 2023 level of Preparedness funding for contract and administrative support for firefighting organizations managed by tribal nations and tribal workforce development through dedicated funding totaling \$15.0 million.

The effective mobilization of wildfire response resources is critical to meet objectives for protecting and managing natural and cultural resources. Federal wildland fire management agencies emphasize risk-informed wildfire response. This approach means Interior and other agencies take intensive suppression actions when required to protect life, property, and other assets at risk. However, a different approach may be utilized in areas where wildfire risks are low or where fire may achieve ecological benefits.

Managing wildfires for multiple objectives allows implementation of wildland fire management strategies and tactics to better manage risk, meet protection and resource objectives, and reduce costs. Effective response to wildfire requires the proper resources to analyze risks, evaluate potential actions, provide program management and oversight, and provide operational resources to manage wildfires.

Interior recognizes the importance of developing and adopting advanced or emergent technologies to support the preparation for and response to wildfire incidents.

BIL provides Interior additional funding through FY 2026 for certain Preparedness activities. For more information on BIL-funded Preparedness accomplishments and plans, see the FY 2024 BIL spend plan in the “Other Exhibits” section of this justification.

BIA Improves Recruitment and Retention by Relocating a New Mexico Helitack Crew



A Vulcan Peak Helitack crew member stands beside a helicopter on a ridge overlook a stunning, arid landscape. (Photo by BIA.)

As housing costs have risen in Mescalero, New Mexico, the Bureau of Indian Affairs has struggled to recruit personnel for its Vulcan Peak Helitack program. In 2022, the BIA relocated the program to the Double Eagle II Airport in Albuquerque.

With the new, more centralized location for its program, the BIA was able to reach a broader candidate pool and hire talented employees to establish a six-person helitack crew.

The centralized location also allowed the crew to respond not only to wildfire ignitions in the surrounding area and across the state, but also to be dispatched to incidents in Arizona, Alaska, California, Montana, Oklahoma, Utah, and Wyoming. The crew gained valuable experience through its varied assignments, which enabled the members to acquire critical leadership qualifications.

This move is one example of how the Interior Department is adapting to attract and retain talented wildland fire personnel. By relocating the crew, the BIA addressed concerns about rising housing costs for employees. The change is allowing the BIA to continue building its wildland fire management program by attracting dedicated employees who will add aviation and wildland fire suppression capabilities. At the same time, the move is providing expanded opportunities to the crew members, enabling them to gain more qualifications and develop into wildland fire leaders who can benefit fire management efforts in the long term.

Preparedness Resources Tables

Table 4 provides the total number of personnel employed within the Preparedness program and the type and number of resources used (staffed or contracted). The data for 2022 data is actual, as reported, while the data for 2023 and 2024 are estimates.

Table 4: Estimated Interior Preparedness Resources, Fiscal Years 2022-2024

Asset or Resource Type	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Request
Personnel: Total Number of Federal Personnel	4,470	4,730	5,130
Personnel: Federal Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	2,053	2,173	2,543
Personnel: Number of Smokejumpers	154	155	155
Personnel: Number of Type 1 Hotshot Crews	18	18	18
Equipment: Number of Engines	667	670	675
Equipment: Number of Other Heavy Equipment	88	96	100
Aviation: Number of Water Scoopers	6	6	6
Aviation: Number of Single Engine Air Tankers	35	35	35
Aviation: Number of Type 1 Helicopters	1	1	1
Aviation: Number of Type 2 Helicopters	9	9	9
Aviation: Number of Type 3 Helicopters	31	31	31
Aviation: Number of Smokejumper Planes	7	7	7
Aviation: Number of ASM/Lead Planes	5	5	5
Aviation: Number of Air Tactical Units	13	13	13
Aviation: Number of Utility Aircraft	5	5	5

This table provides estimates for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024. Actual figures will depend on the timing and implementation of specific budget actions.

Table 5 identifies additional Preparedness resources funded through agreements between BIA and individual tribal nations. The data for 2022 data is actual, as reported, while the data for 2023 and 2024 are estimates.

Table 5: Estimated Tribal Preparedness Resources, Fiscal Years 2022-2024

Asset or Resource Type	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Request
Personnel: Total Number of Tribal Personnel	412	421	456
Personnel: Tribal Full-Time Equivalent (FTE)	220	275	330
Personnel: Number of Type 1 Hotshot Crews	4	4	4
Equipment: Number of Engines	50	60	70
Equipment: Number of Other Heavy Equipment	18	20	22

This table provides estimates for Fiscal Years 2023 and 2024. Actual figures will depend on the timing and implementation of specific budget actions.

Table 6 displays Preparedness expenditures across the different general cost categories. The 2022 column displays actual budget data from Interior’s financial accounting system. The 2023 and 2024 Request columns display estimated cost category allocations.

Table 6: Estimated Preparedness Program Costs, Fiscal Years 2022-2024
(Dollars in Thousands)

General Cost Category	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Request
Salaries and Benefits	268,489	302,000	370,000
Travel and Permanent Change of Station Moves	4,842	5,600	7,100
General Contracts and Agreements	40,499	46,700	54,500
Aviation Contracts and Use	39,726	43,800	55,300
Tribal Contracts and Agreements	25,833	39,800	40,000
Fire Vehicle and Equipment Fleet	8,558	9,900	10,600
Supplies and Materials	21,404	24,700	28,400
Other/ A	11,255	13,000	13,500
Total Program Costs	420,605	485,500	579,400

A/ The “Other” category includes primarily expenditures in utilities and rental payments.

Note: Amounts include BIL funding: \$75,560,300 for 2022; \$99,500,000 for 2023; and \$24,875,000 for 2024.

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SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS



Interior’s Wildland Fire Management bureaus, offices, and partners prepare thoroughly so that, when the need for fire suppression arises, personnel and other resources and assets are ready to go to incidents on a moment’s notice. The Suppression Operations activity comprises the range of actions taken to directly extinguish wildfires, prevent the movement and growth of unwanted fire, and provide a management response to every wildfire.

The Suppression Operations activity also provides funding for post-fire emergency stabilization.

Activity: Suppression Operations Subactivity: Suppression Operations

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted/ A	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes/ A (+/-)	2024 Request	Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)
Dollars <i>(in Thousands)/ A</i>	383,657	0	+0	+0	+383,657	383,657	+383,657
<i>FTE/ B</i>	346	346	+0	+0	+0	346	+0

A/ The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, provided \$458,657,000 in emergency disaster relief appropriations. This funding is not displayed in this table. Of this total amount, \$383,657,000 is the amount provided pursuant to Division O of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141). It is typically provided as base funding through regular appropriations. The 2024 budget restores the \$383.7 million as base appropriations.

B/ Direct federal FTE

Program Changes

The 2024 budget request provides \$383,657,000 for Suppression Operations. This level is +\$383.7 million more than the base appropriation for Suppression Operations for 2023 but equal to the level provided for by P.L. 115-141. Congress appropriated 2023 funds for Suppression Operations through the disaster relief supplemental. The request provides funding for 346 federal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted level.

Summary of 2024 Program Change for Suppression Operations

Program Change	Dollars in Thousands	FTE/ A
Restore Base Appropriations	+383,657	+0
TOTAL Program Change	+383,657	+0

A/ Direct and allocated federal FTE; estimates of tribal FTE are included elsewhere in this justification.

- **Restore Base Appropriations** (+383,657,000/+0 FTE) – The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, (P.L. 117-328) reflected a significant shift of funding for Interior’s Wildland Fire Management. The law shifted \$383.7 million in Suppression Operations funding from regular discretionary appropriations to one-time emergency disaster relief appropriations. The 2024 budget restores base funding for Suppression Operations to regular appropriations. The request fully funds Suppression Operations at the ten-year average of suppression obligations as reported in the 2015 President’s budget, in accordance with Division O of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141).

In addition to this funding, the 2024 budget request makes available another \$350.0 million through the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund. Interior may access the Reserve Fund if the costs of suppression operations exceed the resources available for Suppression Operations in the Wildland Fire Management account. In combination, Suppression Operations funding in this account and Reserve Fund resources help to ensure that sufficient funds are available for suppression needs at all times. For more information on the Reserve Fund, see the “Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund” section of this justification.

Program Overview

When wildfires occur, Interior uses Suppression Operations funds to support the direct response to manage these incidents to protect life, property, infrastructure, and natural and cultural resources. The Suppression Operations activity of the Wildland Fire Management account funds an extensive range of resources, including such things as:

- Incident management personnel and support functions;
- Call-when-needed aviation and operational assets;
- Logistical services, supplies, and equipment;
- Temporary emergency firefighters; and
- Personnel costs beyond those that are covered by the Preparedness activity.

Wildfire response actions are guided by resource priorities and objectives identified in departmental and bureau management plans, including fire management plans. Responses may include the following:

- Suppressing wildfires that threaten lives, communities, and values at risk;
- Managing wildfires to accomplish resource benefit, when determined to be safe and appropriate;
- Implementing emergency stabilization projects that minimize threats to life or property; protect water quality; and reduce the risks of floods, landslides, and erosion; and
- Using fire severity funding, provided by the Suppression Operations appropriation, to increase Preparedness response capabilities during extraordinary situations. These funds ensure that Interior can effectively prepare for and manage wildfire response even in periods of prolonged high fire activity and danger.

Program Activities

The 2024 budget request for Suppression Operations supports wildfire suppression and response throughout the United States. It provides funding for 346 federal FTE, including seasonal and temporary workers who provide increased response capacity.

The request for Suppression Operations also supports the President’s firefighter pay reforms, which are funded in part through proposed program increases for Preparedness and Fuels Management (see also those sections of this justification). Interior estimates that the additional costs to Suppression Operations attributable to these reforms will be \$60.0 million for 2024. Actual costs will depend on wildfire activity, which varies from year to year. These costs will be paid using the funding provided for Suppression Operations through the Wildland Fire Management account, including funding transferred from the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund.

Annual Suppression Operations obligations fluctuate from year to year. In calculating the ten-year average, Interior adjusts obligations estimates annually to account for inflation. Funding for Suppression Operations was historically formulated using a ten-year average of prior-year obligations that was updated annually. Since the enactment of P.L. 115-141, though, funding for Suppression Operations is based on the ten-year average of suppression obligations as reported in the 2015 President’s budget. For informational purposes, to show the trend in fire suppression costs, Interior continues to report the updated ten-year average, as shown in Table 7 below.

**Table 7:
Budget Obligations on Suppression Operations
Fiscal Years 2012–2022
(Dollars in Thousands)**

Fiscal Year	Net Nominal Suppression Obligations (\$)	Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Inflater [2012=1.00]	GDP Deflator [2022=1.00]	Adjusted Obligations (\$) [2022=1.00]	Rolling 10-Year Average of Obligations (\$)
2012	465,832	1.0000	0.8205	567,709	454,256
2013	399,199	1.0159	0.8336	478,889	456,680
2014	326,194	1.0318	0.8466	385,281	454,096
2015	417,545	1.0374	0.8512	490,517	461,458
2016	371,729	1.0444	0.8570	433,767	446,643
2017	508,103	1.0626	0.8719	582,745	442,025
2018	528,350	1.0863	0.8914	592,746	450,511
2019	440,708	1.1049	0.9066	486,099	470,842
2020	510,947	1.1282	0.9257	551,933	496,628
2021	648,317	1.1576	0.9499	682,536	525,222
2022	649,743	1.2187	1.0000	649,743	533,426

Partnerships and Proactive Fuels Treatments Prevent Large, Devastating Wildfire in Eastern Oregon



An aerial view shortly after the Jackson Fire shows how a fuel break halted the fire's growth. (Photo by BLM).

In 2000, the Jackson Fire grew to 80,000 acres and threatened natural resources and livelihoods in Malheur County, Oregon. After that fire, the Bureau of Land Management began a collaboration with local partners to prevent extensive damage by future wildfires.

Local leaders created the Malheur County Community Wildfire Protection Plan. It calls for fuel breaks spanning a network of public and private lands.

The Bureau of Land Management and local organizations began to create the fuel breaks by strategically mowing overgrown vegetation. They then created disc lines using a tractor with an attachment made of metal discs to expose bare dirt, which left little vegetation that could fuel a fire. They also sprayed the area to create a 50-foot buffer.

Additional mowing and chemical treatments each year keep grasses and other plants to a minimum along the fuel breaks.

When the Willowcreek Fire ignited during a hot, windy, dry day in June 2022, the conditions were ripe for the fire to spread quickly. However, these barriers, combined with a system of existing roads, greatly enhanced suppression efforts. Even though high winds pushed the flames, wildland firefighters used the fuel breaks to safely battle the incident, keeping it from growing beyond 40,000 acres.

These partnerships and the proactive fuel management effort they produced allowed firefighters to safely suppress the Willowcreek Fire, which otherwise could have grown into a much larger fire that would significantly impact the local area.

As illustrated in Figure 1 below, the trend over the last quarter of a century indicates a significant rise in costs, with obligations doubling during this time period.

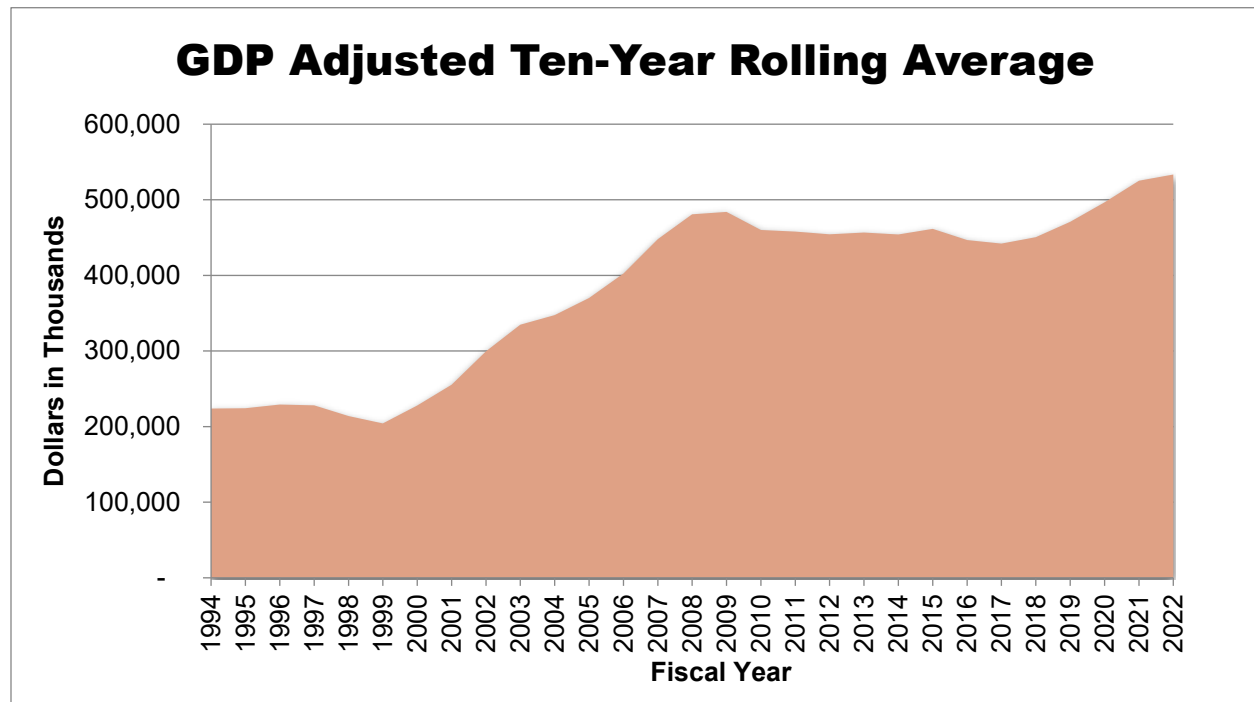


Figure 1: Trend in the ten-year average of Department of the Interior suppression obligations, 1994-2022

This rise in costs is attributable to several compounding factors such as climate change (which is contributing to increased annual fire workload and severity); population growth and increased development in the wildland-urban interface (WUI) (which are increasing wildfire exposure and incident complexity); and escalation in costs of wildland firefighting resources. For example:

- Increases in invasive annual grasses result in increased flammability and shorter fire return intervals on rangelands;
- Drought conditions, insect infestations, below normal snowpack (or earlier mountain snow melt), and extended burning seasons contribute to a higher frequency of large fires and greater wildfire severity in forests; and
- Population growth and home construction in the WUI complicate landscape protection and response efforts while also creating additional sources of ignition.

Interior continues to work closely with the USDA Forest Service and other partners to address the challenge of rising suppression costs. This work includes using risk-based strategies to reduce unwanted vegetation and manage wildfires to meet resource and protection objectives. A single wildfire may simultaneously be suppressed in one location and allowed to burn in another location to achieve resource benefits, including the reduction of fuel load, when it is safe and appropriate to do so. These operations balance the expenditure of Suppression Operations funding with the risk a wildfire poses to firefighters, the public, and natural and cultural resources.

Steadfast Wildfire Suppression Saves Yosemite's Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias



Wildland fire personnel stand in front of a giant sequoia as smoke rises in the distances. (Photo by NPS).

Giant sequoias, an iconic fire-adapted species that only grows in the California Sierra Nevada mountain range, are among the world's largest and longest-lived trees, living up to 3,000 years. Historically, fire rarely killed mature giant sequoias. However, as wildfires have become more extreme in recent years, approximately 20 percent of the trees have been lost.

On July 7, 2022, the Washburn Fire ignited near the Mariposa Grove of Giant Sequoias in Yosemite National Park. Yosemite's wildland fire personnel responded, and an immediate visitor evacuation occurred. As the fire continued to grow, over 1,700 federal, state, local and Tribal personnel from across the nation assisted with the fire suppression operation.

The Washburn Fire was fully contained on August 3, 2022. It was limited to 4,886 acres by aggressive suppression efforts, which were assisted by a history of fuels treatments dating back to the 1970s. No giant sequoias were lost.

Fuels reduction treatments and prescribed burns will continue in the giant sequoia groves to protect the trees from future extreme wildfires. Full fire suppression responses in the groves will also continue so future generations can experience the majesty of the world's largest trees.

FUELS MANAGEMENT



The Fuels Management activity funds strategic investments in managing vegetation to reduce the intensity, severity, and negative effects of wildfire. Fuels management provides cost-effective benefits to the American people, helps restore and maintain healthy ecosystems, supports communities in their efforts to become fire-adapted, and helps protect highly valuable resources and assets. Hazardous fuels treatments reduce the risks and mitigate the impacts of wildfires and contribute to greater resilience to climate change.

Activity: Fuels Management
Subactivity: Fuels Management

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request	Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)
Dollars (in Thousands)	227,000	247,000	+12,928	+0	+33,344	293,272	+46,272
<i>FTE/A</i>	1,091	1,128	+0	+0	+0	1,128	+0
<i>Tribal FTE</i>	382	415	+0	+0	+0	415	+0

A/ Direct federal FTE

Program Changes

The 2024 budget request provides \$293,272,000 for Fuels Management, a total program change of +\$33.3 million above the 2023 enacted level. The request provides funding for 1,128 federal FTE and 415 tribal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted levels.

Summary of 2024 Program Changes for Fuels Management

Program Changes	Dollars in Thousands	FTE/A
Increase Firefighters' Compensation	+24,344	+0
Increase Tribal Contract Support and Reserved Treaty Rights Lands Projects	+9,000	+0
TOTAL Program Changes	+33,344	+0

A/ Direct and allocated federal FTE; estimates of tribal FTE are included elsewhere in this justification.

- **Increase Firefighters' Compensation** (+\$24,344,000/+0 FTE/+0 tribal FTE) – The 2024 budget request increases funding for federal and tribal wildland firefighters' pay by a total of \$72.0 million,

including \$24.3 million in Fuels Management (see also the “Preparedness” and “Suppression Operations” sections of this justification). These pay increases build on the President’s 2021 compensation increases for wildland firefighters and the BIL special pay supplements for federal firefighters in 2022 and 2023 with reforms to provide permanent increases in pay for wildland firefighters.

To implement permanent pay increases for federal wildland personnel, the Administration proposes legislation to:

- Establish a special base rate salary table for wildland firefighters,
- Create a new premium pay category that provides some additional compensation for all hours a wildland fire responder is mobilized on an incident, and
- Establish a streamlined pay cap that provides waiver authority to the Secretary using specific criteria.

The budget funds these federal pay reforms and similar pay increases for tribal personnel. For more information on these pay increases, see the “Preparedness” section of this justification.

- **Increase Tribal Contract Support and Reserved Treaty Rights Lands Projects** (+\$9,000,000/+0 federal FTE/+0 tribal FTE) – The 2024 budget request provides a total increase of \$9.0 million above the 2023 enacted level of \$11.0 million for Reserved Treaty Rights Lands (RTRL) projects and tribal contract and administrative support. Within the total request of \$20.0 million, the budget provides \$5.0 million for contract and administrative support for fuels management activities of firefighting organizations managed by tribal nations. The other \$15.0 million is for RTRL, which enables tribal nations to participate in collaborative projects with non-tribal landowners to enhance the health and resiliency of priority tribal natural resources at high risk from wildfire.

Good Neighbor and Stewardship Contracting Authorities

The 2024 budget proposes legislation to expand Good Neighbor and Stewardship Contracting authorities, currently available to BLM and the USDA Forest Service, to include FWS and NPS.

Expanding these authorities would allow the additional bureaus to enter into cooperative agreements or contracts with states, tribes, and counties to perform watershed restoration and forest management services on bureau lands. The FWS and NPS would also be able to enter into stewardship contracts or agreements to achieve bureau land and resource management goals. These contracts enable agencies to apply the value of timber or other forest products removed from the lands as an offset against the cost of land and resource management services provided through the agreement.

For more information, see Interior’s Budget in Brief and the Office of the Secretary budget justification.

Program Overview

The strategic management of burnable vegetation (known in the wildland fire management community as “fuels”) is an effective approach to reduce the risk to and negative effects of wildfires on highly valuable resources and assets. Interior carries out fuels management in collaboration with multiple partners, including other federal agencies, tribal nations, states, counties, local organizations, and private landowners. Bureau specialists plan, implement, and monitor fuels management projects to mitigate the risks and impacts of wildfires and achieve priority land management objectives. This work occurs year-round, encompassing a diversity of geographic locations, vegetation types, and treatment methods.

Specialists use a variety of active management practices, including prescribed fire (e.g., broadcast burning and pile burning), mechanical methods (e.g., thinning excess trees and mowing brush and grass), and other methods (e.g., chemical, biological, and grazing). Fuels management is coordinated with resource management and among stakeholders to mitigate wildfire risks and ensure projects comply with regulations. Community assistance activities enhance and facilitate these efforts.

Fuels management projects most effectively mitigate the potential losses and impacts from wildfires when projects are prioritized and coordinated across land ownership boundaries. Interior continues to support the implementation of work to achieve the following goals of the National Cohesive Strategy through:

- **Fire-Adapted Communities**
 - Working with communities to share expertise and implement effective wildfire mitigation to protect community values, and
 - Contributing to and protecting local and tribal nation economies;

- **Resilient Landscapes**
 - Maintaining and restoring the integrity of landscapes and their resilience to wildfires,
 - Integrating cultural and natural resource program efforts to maintain fire’s natural role, and
 - Implementing treatments on invasive species; and

- **Safe and Effective Wildfire Response**
 - Strategically locating treatments to improve public and firefighter safety, enhance opportunities to manage wildfires, and reduce losses from wildfires.

How One Tribe is Restoring the Fire-dependent Longleaf Pine



Members of the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas fire management program stand in a forest clearing. (Photo by The Nature Conservancy.)

The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe of Texas has a deep cultural connection to the distinctive longleaf pine tree. Longleaf pines historically grew throughout the southeastern United States. They covered about 90 million acres (twice the size of the state of Georgia). The trees require frequent low-intensity fires to regenerate. Historically, those fires occurred every two to ten years. For centuries, the Alabama-Coushatta Tribe managed the land to help the trees thrive, including through prescribed fire.

As Western settlers spread throughout the country, they brought with them a practice of suppressing all fire. Combined with extensive timber harvests, the longleaf pine was decimated, its total acreage reduced by more than 95 percent.

The Alabama-Coushatta Tribe's fire management program is taking a proactive approach to restore longleaf pine stands. It invested in new fire facilities, personnel, and equipment. The Tribe also requested the establishment of a Reserved Treaty Rights Lands program to collaborate on restoration activities with neighboring non-Tribal landowners. The BIA provided funding to support the program.

In 2012, the Tribe planted 200 acres of longleaf pine seedlings. Since then, its fire management program has maintained the mature stands using prescribed fire. In 2022, the Tribe won the Big Thicket Association's R.E. Jackson Conservation Award for its effort.

In the future, the Tribe hopes to restore up to 400 acres of longleaf pine forest.

Program Activities

Interior will continue to collaborate and coordinate with federal, tribal nation, state, and local partners and stakeholders to maximize resources and better incorporate fuels management into resource management planning.

The 2024 budget request for Fuels Management:

- Supports 1,128 federal FTE and 415 tribal FTE—the same as the 2023 enacted levels—to plan, implement, and monitor fuels treatments in an integrated approach with resource management and stakeholders to ensure that all projects comply with regulations and meet Interior’s objectives, including increasing the safety of wildland fire personnel and the public;
- Increases funding for the RTRL program and tribal contract and administrative support for fuels management activities to a total \$20.0 million (\$9.0 million more than the 2023 enacted level; to totals of \$5.0 million for tribal contract and administrative support and \$15.0 million for RTRL projects);
- Together with BIL funding, supports fuels management on an estimated 2 million acres and funds an estimated 2,000 risk assessments, post-treatment monitoring, contract preparation, and administrative actions necessary to apply scientific principles to mitigate the risks and impacts of wildfires that would otherwise contribute to carbon emissions. This work will improve the climate resiliency of communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems to wildfires by increasing their abilities to withstand a wildfire and recover quickly (see also the FY 2024 BIL spend plan in the “Other Exhibits” section of this justification); and
- Helps to mitigate the impacts from potential wildfire emissions by promoting and maintaining land in the desired condition.

During 2024, Interior will continue to support efforts to protect the sagebrush ecosystem from wildfire and the potential conversion to invasive annual grasses. The conversion from sagebrush- to annual grass-dominated lands leads to a net reduction in carbon storage. That reduction in carbon storage worsens the impacts from climate change. Homes that exist in this ecosystem are among those with the highest likelihood of loss from wildfire in the United States.¹ Interior will support collaborative wildland fire and invasive plant management strategies to reduce the establishment, spread, and subsequent degradation by invasive annual grasses that alter wildfire probability and intensity and therefore increase risk.

BIL provides Interior additional funding through FY 2026 for Fuels Management activities. For more information on BIL-funded Fuels Management accomplishments and plans, see the FY 2024 BIL spend plan in the “Other Exhibits” section of this justification.

¹The USDA Forest Service created the “Wildfire Risk to Communities” website in 2020. The site is designed to help community leaders, such as elected officials, community planners, and fire managers. <https://wildfirerisk.org/>

Prescribed Fire Helps the Crow Agency Battle an Invasive Weed



Wildland firefighters receive a briefing prior to beginning a prescribed burn in the Crow Reservation's Pryor Mountains. (Photo by BIA.)

Many native plants, animals, and landscapes across the 2.2 million-acre Crow Reservation in southern Montana are adapted to the natural occurrence of wildfire. In recent years, however, an invasive weed called leafy spurge has established in the Crow Reservation's Pryor Mountains. Once this perennial weed appears in an area, it spreads quickly if it is not controlled. The root system of the weed may spread over 30 feet into the soil, outcompeting native plant species for water and nutrients and altering the landscape's natural wildfire resilience. The plant is also poisonous to some animals.

In October 2022, wildland firefighters with the BIA Crow Agency conducted a prescribed fire on 270 acres where leafy spurge had established on the southwest slope of the mountains. The BIA Crow Agency used fuels management and lands services funding for the project.

Fire managers wanted to learn if removing small areas of big sage with prescribed fire, and later spraying with herbicide, would help control the weed and improve range and wildlife habitat conditions.

Significant preparations were required to implement the prescribed fire. The burn plan involved monitoring environmental conditions such as wind, fuel moisture, and temperature to ensure the right conditions to achieve their desired effect. Cultural resource advisors were also consulted to ensure cultural and archeological artifacts were marked and traditional sites were protected from unintended disruption.

OTHER OPERATIONS

Other Operations is a category of program activities that comprises three sub-activities:

1. Burned Area Rehabilitation
2. Facilities Construction and Maintenance
3. Joint Fire Science Program

Activity: Other Operations (Dollars in Thousands)

Subactivity	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request	Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)
Burned Area Rehabilitation	22,470	20,470	+0	+0	+0	20,470	+0
Facilities Construction and Maintenance	18,427	10,000	+0	+0	+22,000	32,000	+22,000
Joint Fire Science Program	4,000	4,500	+0	+0	-500	4,000	-500
TOTAL, All Subactivities	44,897	34,970	+0	+0	+21,500	56,470	+21,500

Activity: Other Operations (Personnel Levels)

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request	Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)
<i>FTE/ A</i>	63	63	+0	+0	+0	63	+0
<i>Tribal FTE</i>	68	68	+0	+0	+0	68	+0

A/ Direct federal FTE

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Burned Area Rehabilitation



The Burned Area Rehabilitation subactivity supports efforts to repair or improve burned landscapes that are unlikely to recover without human assistance.

Activity: Other Operations
Subactivity: Burned Area Rehabilitation

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request	Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)
Dollars <i>(in Thousands)</i>	22,470	20,470	+0	+0	+0	20,470	+0
<i>FTE/A</i>	59	59	+0	+0	+0	59	+0
<i>Tribal FTE</i>	68	68	+0	+0	+0	68	+0

A/ Direct federal FTE

Program Changes

The 2024 budget request for Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) is \$20,470,000, 59 federal FTE, and 68 tribal FTE. The request reflects no program change from the 2023 enacted level.

Program Overview

The BAR subactivity provides for the early phases of rehabilitation of landscapes damaged by wildfire that are unlikely to recover naturally. Working with partners from tribal nations, states, counties, and local governments, Interior works on non-emergency rehabilitation actions that may take up to five years to complete. *Immediate* threats after a fire—such as floods, debris flows, and landslides—are treated using Emergency Stabilization funds from the Suppression Operations activity. BAR picks up where emergency stabilization leaves off.

BAR treatments help prevent further degradation of watersheds and landscapes affected by wildfire. Through these projects, agencies may re-seed or plant trees and other desired vegetation to mitigate the risk of catastrophic landslides, prevent the establishment of invasive species, maintain soil productivity, and initiate the recovery of critical wildlife habitat. Other activities may also include the repair of minor assets such as signs damaged by wildfire, rehabilitation of tribal nation trust resources, and monitoring treatment effectiveness and success.

Promoting Resiliency and Long-Term Recovery After a Wildfire



Wildland firefighters discuss emergency response in a forest burned by the Cerro Pelado Fire. (Photo by BIA.)

The Cerro Pelado Fire ignited on April 22, 2022, during a hot, dry day in northern New Mexico. Drought, wind, and increased temperatures quickly pushed the flames toward several communities, threatening homes, infrastructure, and natural resources. While firefighters eventually contained the fire at nearly 47,000 acres a few weeks later, and no homes were lost, the fire blackened large areas of USDA Forest Service and tribal lands, including springs and cultural sites important to the Pueblo of Jemez, Pueblo of Santo Domingo, and Pueblo de Cochiti lands.

The large swaths of charred landscape required an emergency response to reduce flooding and erosion potential and to protect cultural sites and other natural resources important to each Pueblo. Shortly after the fire was contained, a burned area emergency response team began developing a post-wildfire emergency response plan. The team engaged with tribes and other partners to develop a collective emergency treatment system designed to reduce flooding, debris flow, and erosion threats. The plan involves spring and cultural site protections; road stabilization; flood warning systems; and burned area recovery activities such as reforestation, invasive and noxious weed treatments, resource protection, and boundary fence replacement or repair.

The plan will promote long-term recovery and foster resilience so that when future wildfires approach, nearby lands and communities will have better odds of not only surviving the wildfire but also of recovering more quickly.

Program managers evaluate and prioritize rehabilitation projects at the local and national level. Restoration necessary more than five years after a wildfire fall under the land management agency’s program goals for long-term management.

Some examples of BAR actions include the following:

BAR Actions	Some 2022 Accomplishments
Revegetation	Replanted more than 300 acres of native vegetation affected by wildfires that burned in Hawaii, Washington, and Arizona.
Invasive Species Control and Removal	Surveyed and treated 27 wilderness campsites in Rocky Mountain National Park impacted by the Cameron Peak and East Troublesome fire.
Minor Repairs	Repaired more than 100 miles of trails in Lassen Volcanic National Park damaged by the Dixie wildfires that burned in California in 2021.

Program Activities

The 2024 budget request provides \$20.5 million (the same level as the 2023 enacted level) for BAR treatments that restore and enhance ecosystem health and enable landscapes to be more resilient to wildfires and the effects of climate change. Without timely rehabilitation actions to restore burned acres to their desired condition, post-wildfire damages become more complex and costly to treat.

The request supports 59 federal FTE and 68 tribal FTE to evaluate and implement priority rehabilitation projects at the local, tribal, and national levels. The 2024 budget request for BAR will fund BAR treatments for an estimated 630,000 burned acres. Together with funding from BIL, the request will allow Interior and its partners to treat more than 700,000 acres (see also the FY 2024 BIL spend plan in the “Other Exhibits” section of this justification).

Additionally, BIL funds will support expansion of the proactive development and acquisition of plant materials such as locally adapted, native seeds and vegetation like sagebrush, white bark pine, and giant sequoias that are only available in limited quantities or over long timeframes, particularly when there is an immediate post-fire recovery need. Interior (including USGS) will continue to work cooperatively with the USDA Forest Service and scientific institutions to implement monitoring protocols and methods for BAR treatments.

The Wildland Fire Management program established a baseline in 2009 to monitor the long-term effects of rehabilitating treated acres to their desired condition. The description of desired condition includes objectives for physical, chemical, hydrologic, and biologic attributes. For example, objectives may include managing for specific species canopy cover or vegetation height.

Helping to Restore Giant Sequoias after Significant Wildfires



Giant sequoia cones collected from the handful of surviving trees in the Board Camp Grove. (Photo by NPS.)

Giant sequoias are one of the most fire-adapted species on earth. However, as wildfires become more extreme, sequoias are dying. During 2020 and 2021, two major wildfires burned through twenty-eight sequoia groves within Sequoia and Kings Canyon National Parks. The 2021 Windy Fire alone killed an estimated 14,000 sequoias, or 19 percent of all giant sequoias in the world. These losses were unprecedented and revealed a need for new approaches to studying and mitigating wildfire impacts.

Giant sequoias have a short natural regeneration window after a wildfire. The trees capitalize on soil conditions and small canopy openings created by the fire.

In response to the recent large wildfires, a burned area emergency response team began an analysis to determine ground conditions and effective restoration activities. The team created a rehabilitation plan, which enables personnel to identify areas where sequoias will likely struggle to regenerate due to overstory losses and a high erosion potential that could remove any surviving sequoia seeds.

A vital component to implement restoration activities is the preparation of seed stock and seedlings so planting can begin immediately after the analysis and planning phase. Burned Area Rehabilitation funding is allowing the National Park Service to complete this preparatory work while completing the necessary environmental analyses.

This work is a groundbreaking effort to address forest ecological damage caused by a combination of more than a century of wildfire suppression and droughts in the Southern Sierra Nevada driven by climate change. As these rehabilitation projects continue, park staff hope their efforts will allow giant sequoia groves to recover from wildfire and continue to thrill future generations of visitors.

Facilities Construction and Maintenance



The Facilities Construction and Maintenance subactivity provides for safe, modern, and energy-efficient facilities that are essential to achieving the Wildland Fire Management program’s mission to protect lives, property, and resources from wildfire.

Activity: Other Operations

Subactivity: Facilities Construction and Maintenance Program

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request	Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)
Dollars <i>(in Thousands)</i>	18,427	10,000	+0	+0	+22,000	32,000	+22,000
<i>FTE/ A</i>	1	1	+0	+0	+0	1	+0

A/ Direct federal FTE

Program Changes

The 2024 budget request provides \$32,000,000 for Facilities Construction and Maintenance, a program change of +\$22.0 million above the 2023 enacted level. The request provides funding for 1 federal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted level.

Summary of 2024 Program Change for Facilities

Program Change	Dollars in Thousands	FTE/ A
Increase Housing for Personnel	+22,000	+0
TOTAL Program Change	+22,000	+0

A/ Direct and allocated federal FTE

- Increase Housing for Personnel** (+\$22,000,000/+0 federal FTE) – The 2024 budget increases funding for capital investments in housing for wildland fire management personnel by \$22.0 million above the 2023 enacted level. The funded projects are drawn from the program’s five-year Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvement plan. The increased funding will allow Interior to advance its efforts to repair, renovate, modernize, and construct housing for personnel. These funds will go a long way toward addressing the problem of inadequate or unaffordable housing facing many wildland firefighters working in certain geographic locations. The request provides funding for 1 federal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted level.

At the requested level, Interior will complete deferred maintenance on buildings and facilities in disrepair, modernize housing and other facilities, and ensure that facilities meet current health and safety standards. The program will provide infrastructure necessary to support Interior's firefighters, safeguard the public, and improve Interior's response to values at risk from wildfire.

Program Overview

The Facilities Construction and Maintenance subactivity provides for safe, functional, and energy-efficient facilities that are essential to achieving the Wildland Fire Management program's mission to protect lives, property, and resources from wildfire.

The program maintains a five-year Deferred Maintenance and Capital Improvement plan. The plan, which the primary Wildland Fire Management bureaus regularly update, presents the projects of greatest need in priority order, focusing on critical health and safety, mission critical resource protection and public safety, achieving sustainability goals, and decreasing long-term operation and maintenance costs. Each project is submitted consistent with Interior's guidance for deferred maintenance and capital improvement.

To ensure an efficient allocation of funding to the highest-priority projects, a departmentwide team reviews submitted projects by total project score and forwards a prioritized list to Interior's Wildland Fire Management leadership for their consideration as part of the budget process. The bureaus monitor design and construction of all Facilities Construction and Maintenance projects to ensure they are completed within scope and budget. They adjust out-year priorities and project plans and cost estimates as needed based on objective criteria applied during the annual evaluation process.

Key areas of emphasis for the Facilities Construction and Maintenance subactivity include the following:

- Providing housing for firefighters and other wildland fire personnel;
- Correcting critical health- and safety-related facility problems by ensuring facilities comply with federal accessibility and Occupational Safety and Health Administration requirements;
- Replacing building systems and components that have exceeded their useful lives;
- Installing facilities that improve the wildfire response capability required to keep fires small and reduce the threats to communities, structures, municipal watersheds, other infrastructure, and wildlife habitat; and
- Providing facilities that are sufficient to maintain readiness and provide full support for wildland fire management activities.

Safe and properly maintained facilities are critical for protecting firefighters and their equipment. The Wildland Fire Management program is repairing and updating facilities that are in deteriorating condition to maintain current health and safety standards. The 2024 budget request significantly increases investments in housing for personnel.

Maintaining the Facilities Construction and Maintenance subactivity allows the Wildland Fire Management program to centrally evaluate projects submitted by all of Interior's bureaus involved in wildland fire management, enhances coordination, and helps ensure the most cost-efficient allocation of

funds to best advance the facilities needs of the integrated fire program. As facilities are replaced or modernized, efficiencies in design for standard space programming—including features that are essential to the Wildland Fire Management program—result in lower operating costs and energy use. The emphasis on a Quality Built Environment, including sustainability and energy conservation, is important for all projects.

Supporting Wildland Fire Management with Sustainable Facilities



The 25,768-acre Imperial National Wildlife Refuge, which spans the borders of California and Arizona, protects 30 miles of wildlife habitat along the lower Colorado River. The new wildland fire facility will support wildland fire management efforts throughout the refuge. (Photo by FWS.)

Effective, safe and timely wildfire management relies heavily on adequate facilities. Fire stations and other buildings allow wildland fire personnel to be stationed in remote locations or near areas prone to wildfire ignitions, which supports rapid and safe fire suppression response.

In fiscal year 2022, the USFWS received \$3 million through the Interior’s wildland fire facilities construction and maintenance appropriation to construct a new fire facility at Imperial National Wildlife Refuge, which spans parts of Arizona and California.

The new building will serve as a multi-function wildland fire facility, providing a fire personnel training room, potable water and utilities for fire staff, and necessary office space for employees and supervisors. The new facility will also provide valuable storage space for wildland fire equipment to shield it from the harsh summer environment. It will also reduce energy costs and minimize its impact on the environment with solar panels, sustainable utility fixtures to reduce water use, LED lighting, high efficiency appliances, and insulation.

The new facility will benefit employees by providing a professional workspace and the federal government by reducing energy consumption and costs while maintaining wildfire response readiness.

Program Activities

The 2024 budget request provides \$32.0 million for Facilities Construction and Maintenance, a program change of +\$22.0 million from the 2023 enacted level. Bureaus will use the funding increase to expand investments in personnel housing. The projects planned to be funded by the 2024 budget request include 12 projects in nine states with the highest critical health, safety, and resource protection ratings at this time. Among these projects are seven through which bureaus will repair, renovate, modernize, or construct housing for wildland fire personnel. For a list of projects planned to be funded using the 2024 request, see Table 8, below:

Table 8: Construction and Deferred Maintenance Plan Summary
Wildland Fire Management
FY 2024
(Dollars In Thousands)

Project Title	State	Bureau	Total Project Cost	Funded to Date	2024 Request	Remaining to be Funded
Richfield Fire Station Repair (Phase 1 of 2)	UT	BLM	\$7,000	\$0	\$850	\$6,150
Imperial Building Fire Cache Replacement	AZ	FWS	\$2,280	\$0	\$2,280	\$0
Minidoka Fire Equipment Storage Replacement	ID	FWS	\$1,500	\$0	\$1,500	\$0
Grass Valley Fire Crew Quarters Repair	OR	BLM	\$5,109	\$0	\$5,109	\$0
El Portal Wildland Fire Barracks Construction (Phase 1 of 2)	CA	NPS	\$8,725	\$0	\$5,250	\$3,475
Salmon Crew Quarter Construction	ID	BLM	\$3,200	\$0	\$3,200	\$0
Big Cypress Fire Station Replacement (Phase 2 of 2)	FL	NPS	\$4,803	\$303	\$4,500	\$0
Logandale Crew Quarters Sprinkler System Renovation	NV	BLM	\$835	\$0	\$835	\$0
Pahrump Crew Quarters Sprinkler System Renovation	NV	BLM	\$745	\$0	\$745	\$0
Piedmont Bunking Facilities Replacement	GA	FWS	\$648	\$0	\$648	\$0
Piedmont Fire Cache Building Renovation	GA	FWS	\$619	\$0	\$619	\$0
Lewistown Fire Crew Quarters Construction	MT	BLM	\$5,951	\$0	\$5,951	\$0
Architectural and Engineering Design	N/A	DOI	\$0	\$0	\$513	\$0
TOTAL	N/A	N/A	\$41,415	\$303	\$32,000	\$9,625

This table displays the Wildland Fire Management funding planned to be allocated for the projects from the 2024 budget request for Facilities Construction and Maintenance. However, Interior may change allocations for these purposes depending on funding enacted for 2024, changes in project plans and cost estimates, the availability of other funding, and re-prioritization determined to be necessary to optimize the use of these appropriations.

Joint Fire Science Program



The Joint Fire Science Program, which Interior and the USDA Forest Service fund and administer together, funds wildland fire research and science to inform wildland fire management policies and decisions at local, regional, and national levels.

Activity: Other Operations
Subactivity: Joint Fire Science Program

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request	Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)
Dollars <i>(in Thousands)</i>	4,000	4,500	+0	+0	-500	4,000	-500
<i>FTE/ A</i>	3	3	+0	+0	+0	3	+0

A/ Direct federal FTE

Program Changes

The 2024 budget request provides \$4,000,000 for Interior’s share of funding for the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP), a program change of -\$500,000 below the 2023 enacted level. The request provides funding for 3 federal FTE, the same as the 2023 enacted level.

Summary of 2024 Program Change for JFSP

Program Change	Dollars in Thousands	FTE/ A
Wildland Fire Research	-500	+0
TOTAL Program Change	-500	+0

A/ Direct and allocated federal FTE

- **Wildland Fire Research** (-\$500,000/+0 federal FTE) – The 2024 budget reduces new funding for JFSP. Using the request, JFSP will support the President’s priorities to increase research on wildland fire, including climate science and resilience to climate change.

Research priorities for JFSP include the following:

- **Workforce Health and Well-Being:** Research the effects of wildland firefighting and other management activities on the physical and mental health and well-being of firefighters and other

personnel. Topics may include the effects of critical incident stress, line-of-duty hazards, and smoke emissions, including strategies that can address and mitigate these factors.

- **Climate Science:** Study the effects of climate change on wildland fire—both wildfire and prescribed fire—through smoke emissions, changes in carbon storage and cycling, and changes in albedo. Albedo is a measure of how much light that hits a surface is reflected without being absorbed. It is readily measured by satellite remote sensing.

Complex issues need quantification and clarification: for example, in Alaska tundra, wildfires increase absorption of sunlight, leading to melting of permafrost; while in the Continental United States (CONUS), wildfires tend to increase reflectivity, leading to decreased rainfall and drought. Carbon cycling is also complex due to tradeoffs between short and long-term effects of fire, and accounting of below-ground storage and above-ground biomass. Prescribed fire use is thought to benefit long term carbon storage and may lessen the abrupt changes in albedo in most CONUS ecosystems, but additional research is required to confirm its beneficial use under these scenarios.

- **Resilience to Climate Change:** Determine what management actions can help make ecosystems more resilient to the effects of climate change (i.e., “harden” ecosystems). For example, JFSP is funding research into the feasibility of planting species or genotypes that are more drought and heat tolerant (from different parts of species’ range).
- **Environmental Justice:** Examine differences in how wildland fire—including smoke emissions and downstream water quality and debris flow—affects different populations and research potential strategies to address inequities.

Program Overview

JFSP, which Interior and USDA established in 1998, funds research and science that responds to the needs of the wildland fire community. JFSP competitively funds wildland fire science research projects and delivery to answer emerging questions and fill knowledge gaps about managing wildland fire, fuels, and fire-impacted ecosystems.

JFSP works across agency and programmatic boundaries to identify wildland fire research priorities that transcend agency-specific needs. In doing so, JFSP supports valuable cross-agency partnerships to address complex fire science questions that require multiple disciplines, funding sources, integration, and coordination to address. Results from JFSP research studies help agencies:

- Plan and implement fuels treatments;
- Support fire management decisions;
- Better understand the role of fire in various ecosystems;
- Restore lands affected by fire;
- Use the latest science to inform policy; and
- Meet regulatory requirements.

Results from JFSP’s research studies are delivered to the fire management community through the Fire Science Exchange Network (FSEN). This research includes new science on firefighter safety, fuels

management, co-management of risk within the WUI, and post-fire recovery. The 15 regional members of FSEN translate the science to ensure it is useful and actionable by managers and officials. Members also engage managers to identify new research and emerging management needs. In addition, JFSP promotes future workforce development through JFSP's core research funding and the Graduate Research Innovation (GRIN) program. Together, these efforts support hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students who are the next generation of wildland fire, fuels, and natural resources scientists and managers.

Program Activities

The 2024 budget request for JFSP supports an investment portfolio that includes:

- **Science Delivery and Knowledge Exchange:** During 2022, JFSP began to implement the findings of the 2021 FSEN evaluation that will enhance the program's ability to meet end-user wildland fire science needs;
- **Research:** JFSP will execute high-priority research to meet the needs of the wildland fire management and policy communities in collaboration and coordination with USGS and USDA Forest Service research. Examples of these high-priority issues include the effects of climate change on wildfire, the effects of wildfires on climate change, using prescribed fire and other fuels management to increase climate resilience, carbon cycling, and greenhouse gas and smoke emissions;
- **Assessments/Syntheses:** JFSP will conduct assessments to ascertain the state of scientific understanding or management practice and syntheses to capture current scientific understanding and summarize in a manner useful to managers on high priority issues and topics to the wildland fire management and policy communities (e.g., short- and long-term tradeoffs between prescribed fire and wildfire across multiple geographic and temporal scales); and
- **Workforce Development:** JFSP will support management- and policy-relevant research through the GRIN program and other initiatives that support workforce development for the wildland fire community.

JFSP will continue to manage ongoing research projects and execute new research that meets Wildland Fire Management priorities. It will also continue its funding and oversight of the FSEN and its activities, support workforce development programs, and exercise leadership and coordination among the Wildland Fire Management community.

BIL provides Interior additional funding through FY 2026 for JFSP research. For more information on BIL-funded JFSP accomplishments and plans, see the FY 2024 BIL spend plan in the "Other Exhibits" section of this justification.

Improving Wildfire Risk Reduction through Ecosystem Mapping



A FWS wildland firefighter helps private landowners adjacent to the Balcones Canyonlands National Wildlife Refuge set a prescribed fire to manage vegetation and reduce the risk of an extreme wildfire. (Photo by FWS.)

All types of vegetation can act as fuel for a wildland fire. By understanding what vegetation is present and how easily it will burn, fire personnel can better predict and respond to the movement of a fire, as well as mitigate the risk of extreme fires by removing excess vegetation.

While existing datasets and tools have significantly improved fire response and fuel management, land managers have expressed the need for still greater accuracy to capture rapid changes to vegetation. In 2022, JFSP selected a proposal to receive Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding that will enable fire and fuel management specialists to complete strategic planning at large scales.

The USGS Southwest Biological Science Center and the Western Geographic Science Center will explore ways to adapt decision support and mapping tools for fire and fuel management in drylands. They will map current ecosystem conditions in groups, map desired ecological conditions for fire and fuel management, and develop maps that show any departure from these desired conditions.

The products developed from this effort will be shared with land managers and wildland fire personnel through collaborative workshops and outreach. The USGS team will use this opportunity to explain how the new maps can be integrated into agency monitoring and management.

The dynamic maps will benefit land managers as they create regional and landscape-scale fire and fuel management strategies. The maps that show a departure from desired conditions will further benefit a wide range of communities, organizations, and individuals by quantifying the risks to property, livelihoods, and natural resources from wildfires.

WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS RESERVE FUND



The Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund (Reserve Fund) makes available to Interior additional funding for emergency wildfire response and suppression when funding in the Wildland Fire Management account is inadequate to meet the needs. The Reserve Fund resources help to ensure there will be no delay in meeting wildfire suppression needs year-round.

Activity: Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund Subactivity: Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund

	2022 Actual	2023 Enacted	2024 Fixed Costs (+/-)	2024 Internal Transfers (+/-)	2024 Program Changes (+/-)	2024 Request	Change from 2023 Enacted (+/-)
Dollars <i>(in Thousands)</i>	330,000	340,000	+0	+0	+10,000	350,000	+10,000
<i>FTE/ A</i>	0	0	+0	+0	+0	0	+0

A/ Direct federal FTE

Program Changes

The 2024 budget request provides \$350,000,000 for the Reserve Fund, a program change of +\$10.0 million above the 2023 enacted level.

Summary of 2024 Program Change for the Reserve Fund

Program Change	Dollars in Thousands	<i>FTE/ A</i>
Suppression Operations	+10,000	+0
TOTAL Program Change	+10,000	+0

A/ Direct and allocated federal FTE

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2018 (P.L. 115-141) amended the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act and established the Reserve Fund through a so-called discretionary spending “cap adjustment.” This change was in recognition of the fact that funding in the Wildland Fire Management account for Suppression Operations based on the ten-year average of suppression obligations consistently falls short of what is needed to fully fund operational needs (see also the “Suppression Operations” section of this justification).

Under this law, Interior and USDA may access a total of \$2.65 billion in funding for FY 2024, as well as additional new budget authority to suppress wildfires annually through FY 2027. The split between the two departments is proposed in each year's budget, and funding may be transferred between them.

Before Interior may access this funding in a given fiscal year, the Secretary must notify the House and Senate Appropriations Committees that, within 30 days of the notification, Interior will have obligated all resources available for Suppression Operations in the Wildland Fire Management account. Unobligated balances in the Reserve Fund carry forward from one year to the next. Interior will access reserve funding appropriated for previous years before accessing reserve funding appropriated for the budget year. At this time, Interior's Reserve Fund balance is \$670.0 million, including \$330.0 million appropriated for FY 2022 and \$340.0 million appropriated for FY 2023.

The Sec. 104 reporting requirement in Division O, Title I of P.L. 115-141, as amended, requires Interior and USDA to prepare an annual report to Congress on wildfire suppression spending in fiscal years when the respective Department obligates Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund resources. The report is due no later than 90 days after the end of such fiscal year. The 2024 budget request proposes a General Provision that substitutes "180 days" for the current "90 days" after the fiscal year to submit the report. In addition, the General Provision inserts the following after the semicolon in Sec. 104(b)(4), "and shall include an accounting of all spending in the first two quarters of the succeeding fiscal year that is attributable to suppression operations in the report year." For more information on this General Provision, see the budget justification for the Office of the Secretary.

Other Exhibits

Appropriations Language

Appropriations Language Sheet

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DEPARTMENT-WIDE PROGRAMS**

Wildland Fire Management

(Including Transfers of Funds)

For necessary expenses for fire preparedness, fire suppression operations, fire science and research, emergency rehabilitation, fuels management activities, and rural fire assistance by the Department of the Interior, [\$663,786,000] \$1,325,886,000, to remain available until expended, of which not to exceed [\$10,000,000] \$32,000,000 shall be for the renovation or construction of fire facilities: *Provided*, That such funds are also available for repayment of advances to other appropriation accounts from which funds were previously transferred for such purposes: *Provided further*, That of the funds provided [\$247,000,000] \$293,272,000 is for fuels management activities: *Provided further*, That of the funds provided [\$20,470,000] \$20,470,000 is for burned area rehabilitation: *Provided further*, That persons hired pursuant to 43 U.S.C. 1469 may be furnished subsistence and lodging without cost from funds available from this appropriation: *Provided further*, That notwithstanding 42 U.S.C. 1856d, sums received by a bureau or office of the Department of the Interior for fire protection rendered pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 1856 et seq., protection of United States property, may be credited to the appropriation from which funds were expended to provide that protection, and are available without fiscal year limitation: *Provided further*, That using the amounts designated under this title of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior may enter into procurement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, for fuels management activities, and for training and monitoring associated with such fuels management activities on Federal land, or on adjacent non-Federal land for activities that benefit resources on Federal land: *Provided further*, That the costs of implementing any cooperative agreement between the Federal Government and any non-Federal entity may be shared, as mutually agreed on by the affected parties: *Provided further*, That notwithstanding requirements of the Competition in Contracting Act, the Secretary, for purposes of fuels management activities, may obtain maximum practicable competition among: (1) local private, nonprofit, or cooperative entities; (2) Youth Conservation Corps crews, Public Lands Corps (Public Law 109-154), or related partnerships with State, local, or nonprofit youth groups; (3) small or micro-businesses; or (4) other entities that will hire or train locally a significant percentage, defined as 50 percent or more, of the project workforce to complete such contracts: *Provided further*, That in implementing this section, the Secretary shall develop written guidance to field units to ensure accountability and consistent application of the authorities provided herein: *Provided further*, That funds appropriated under this heading may be used to reimburse the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service for the costs of carrying out their responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) to consult and conference, as required by section 7 of such Act, in connection with wildland fire management activities: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of the Interior may use wildland fire appropriations to enter into leases of real property with local governments, at or below fair market value,

to construct capitalized improvements for fire facilities on such leased properties, including but not limited to fire guard stations, retardant stations, and other initial attack and fire support facilities, and to make advance payments for any such lease or for construction activity associated with the lease: *Provided further*, That the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture may authorize the transfer of funds appropriated for wildland fire management, in an aggregate amount not to exceed \$50,000,000, between the Departments when such transfers would facilitate and expedite wildland fire management programs and projects: *Provided further*, That funds provided for wildfire suppression shall be available for support of Federal emergency response actions: *Provided further*, That funds appropriated under this heading shall be available for assistance to or through the Department of State in connection with forest and rangeland research, technical information, and assistance in foreign countries, and, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, shall be available to support forestry, wildland fire management, and related natural resource activities outside the United States and its territories and possessions, including technical assistance, education and training, and cooperation with United States and international organizations: *Provided further*, *That of the funds provided under this heading \$383,657,000 shall be available for wildfire suppression operations, and is provided as the average costs for wildfire suppression operations to meet the terms of a concurrent resolution on the budget. (Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.)*

Wildland Fire Management

[For an additional amount for “Wildland Fire Management”, \$75,000,000, to remain available until expended, for wildland fire suppression activities.]

[For an additional amount for “Wildland Fire Management”, \$429,000,000, to remain available until expended: *Provided*, That of the funds provided under this paragraph in this Act, \$383,657,000 shall be available for wildfire suppression operations, and is provided to meet the terms of section 4004(b)(5)(B) of S. Con. Res. 14 (117th Congress), the concurrent resolution on the budget for fiscal year 2022, and section 1(g)(2) of H. Res. 1151 (117th Congress), as engrossed in the House of Representatives on June 8, 2022: *Provided further*, That of the funds provided under this paragraph in this Act, \$45,343,000 shall be available for fire preparedness.] (*Disaster Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2023.*)

Appropriations Language Citations

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DEPARTMENT-WIDE PROGRAMS****Appropriation: Wildland Fire Management (Including Transfers of Funds)**

- 1. For necessary expenses for fire preparedness, fire suppression operations, fire science and research, emergency rehabilitation, fuels management activities, and rural fire assistance by the Department of the Interior, \$1,325,886,000, to remain available until expended, of which not to exceed \$32,000,000 shall be for the renovation or construction of fire facilities:**

This language provides funding for fire preparedness, suppression operations, fire science and research, emergency rehabilitation, fuels management, and rural fire assistance. The language further provides that such funding is available until expended. Of the total amount, \$32,000,000 is the maximum amount for the construction and maintenance of fire facilities.

- 2. *Provided*, That such funds are also available for repayment of advances to other appropriation accounts from which funds were previously transferred for such purposes:**

This language authorizes appropriations to be used to repay treasury accounts and transfers for previous fires and incidents.

- 3. *Provided further*, That of the funds provided \$293,272,000 is for fuels management activities:**

This language provides funding for fuels management activities.

- 4. *Provided further*, That of the funds provided \$20,470,000 is for burned area rehabilitation:**

This language provides funding for burned area rehabilitation.

- 5. *Provided further*, That persons hired pursuant to 43 U.S.C. 1469 may be furnished subsistence and lodging without cost from funds available from this appropriation:**

This language allows Interior to feed and house firefighters with this appropriation.

- 6. *Provided further*, That notwithstanding 42 U.S.C. 1856d, sums received by a bureau or office of the Department of the Interior for fire protection rendered pursuant to 42 U.S.C. 1856 et seq., protection of United States property, may be credited to the appropriation from which funds were expended to provide that protection, and are available without fiscal year limitation:**

This language allows Interior bureaus and offices to retain funds they receive as reimbursement for fire protection provided to other entities, rather than having to submit them to the U.S. Treasury, and makes these collected amounts available for use until expended.

- 7. *Provided further*, That using the amounts designated under this title of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior may enter into procurement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, for fuels management activities, and for training and monitoring associated with such fuels**

management activities on Federal land, or on adjacent non-Federal land for activities that benefit resources on Federal land:

This language allows Interior to enter into procurement mechanisms (i.e., contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements) for firefighting, fuels management, and training for the benefit of federally held lands or on adjacent non-federal lands if the activities benefit resources on federal land.

- 8. *Provided further*, That the costs of implementing any cooperative agreement between the Federal Government and any non-Federal entity may be shared, as mutually agreed on by the affected parties:**

This language allows Interior to use cost-shared cooperative agreements.

- 9. *Provided further*, That notwithstanding requirements of the Competition in Contracting Act, the Secretary, for purposes of fuels management activities, may obtain maximum practicable competition among: (1) local private, nonprofit, or cooperative entities; (2) Youth Conservation Corps crews, Public Lands Corps (P.L. 109–154), or related partnerships with State, local, or nonprofit youth groups; (3) small or micro-businesses; or (4) other entities that will hire or train locally a significant percentage, defined as 50 percent or more, of the project workforce to complete such contracts:**

This language authorizes the Secretary to use contracting arrangements with the Youth Conservation Corps; local private, nonprofit, or cooperative entities (e.g., small businesses) that may hire or train a significant percentage (50 percent or more) of the project workforce to complete projects.

- 10. *Provided further*, That in implementing this section, the Secretary shall develop written guidance to field units to ensure accountability and consistent application of the authorities provided herein:**

This language directs Interior to formulate and distribute guidance for field staff to use these contracts.

- 11. *Provided further*, That funds appropriated under this heading may be used to reimburse the United States Fish and Wildlife Service and the National Marine Fisheries Service for the costs of carrying out their responsibilities under the Endangered Species Act of 1973 (16 U.S.C. 1531 et seq.) to consult and conference, as required by section 7 of such Act, in connection with wildland fire management activities:**

This language allows Interior to use these appropriated funds to reimburse FWS and the National Marine Fisheries Service for consultation services necessary for compliance with the Endangered Species Act.

- 12. *Provided further*, That the Secretary of the Interior may use wildland fire appropriations to enter into leases of real property with local governments, at or below fair market value, to construct capitalized improvements for fire facilities on such leased properties, including but not limited to fire guard stations, retardant stations, and other initial attack and fire support**

facilities, and to make advance payments for any such lease or for construction activity associated with the lease:

This language authorizes Interior to enter into leases with local governments for properties necessary to provide firefighting facilities and to provide payment in advance for any construction activities if necessary.

- 13. *Provided further, That the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture may authorize the transfer of funds appropriated for wildland fire management, in an aggregate amount not to exceed \$50,000,000, between the Departments when such transfers would facilitate and expedite jointly funded wildland fire management programs and projects:***

This language allows Interior and USDA to transfer funds up to \$50,000,000 annually between the departments to expedite joint wildland fire management programs or projects.

- 14. *Provided further, That funds provided for wildfire suppression shall be available for support of Federal emergency response actions:***

This language allows Interior wildland fire management personnel and services to be used in support of federal emergency responses.

- 15. *Provided further, That funds appropriated under this heading shall be available for assistance to or through the Department of State in connection with forest and rangeland research, technical information, and assistance in foreign countries, and, with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, shall be available to support forestry, wildland fire management, and related natural resource activities outside the United States and its territories and possessions, including technical assistance, education and training, and cooperation with United States and international organizations:***

This language allows Interior's wildland fire management personnel and services to be used to assist foreign countries with the concurrence of the Secretary of State, in support of forestry, wildland fire management, and related natural resource activities, including technical assistance, education, training and cooperation outside the United States.

- 16. *Provided further, That of the funds provided under this heading \$383,657,000 shall be available for wildfire suppression operations, and is provided as the average costs for wildfire suppression operations to meet the terms of a concurrent resolution on the budget.***

This language provides funding for wildfire suppression based on the ten-year average of suppression operations costs, as reported in the FY 2015 President's budget, to meet the terms of a concurrent resolution on the budget.

Appropriations Language Citations

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DEPARTMENT-WIDE PROGRAMS****Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund**

(Including Transfers of Funds)

In addition to the amounts provided under the heading “Department of the Interior—Department-Wide Programs—Wildland Fire Management” for wildfire suppression operations, [\$340,000,000] \$350,000,000, to remain available until transferred, is additional new budget authority [as specified] *in excess of the average costs for wildfire suppression operations* for purposes of [section 4004(b)(5) of S. Con. Res. 14 (117th Congress), the] *a* concurrent resolution on the budget [for fiscal year 2022, and section 1(g) of H. Res. 1151 (117th Congress), as engrossed in the House of Representatives on June 8, 2022]; *Provided*, That such amounts may be transferred to and merged with amounts made available under the headings “Department of Agriculture—Forest Service—Wildland Fire Management” and “Department of the Interior—Department-Wide Programs—Wildland Fire Management” for wildfire suppression operations in the fiscal year in which such amounts are transferred: *Provided further*, That amounts may be transferred to the “Wildland Fire Management” accounts in the Department of Agriculture or the Department of the Interior only upon the notification of the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations that all wildfire suppression operations funds appropriated under that heading in this and prior appropriations Acts to the agency to which the funds will be transferred will be obligated within 30 days: *Provided further*, That the transfer authority provided under this heading is in addition to any other transfer authority provided by law: *Provided further*, That, in determining whether all wildfire suppression operations funds appropriated under the heading “Wildland Fire Management” in this and prior appropriations Acts to either the Department of Agriculture or the Department of the Interior will be obligated within 30 days pursuant to the preceding proviso, any funds transferred or permitted to be transferred pursuant to any other transfer authority provided by law shall be excluded. (*Department of the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2023.*)

Appropriations Language Citations

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
DEPARTMENT-WIDE PROGRAMS****Appropriation: Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund
(Including Transfers of Funds)**

- 1. In addition to the amounts provided under the heading “Department of the Interior-Department-Wide Programs-Wildland Fire Management” for wildfire suppression operations, \$350,000,000, to remain available until transferred, is additional new budget authority in excess of the average costs for wildfire suppression operations for purposes of a concurrent resolution on the budget:**

This language makes available funding for wildfire suppression operations costs in addition to funding provided under the Department of the Interior Wildland Fire Management appropriation. The language further provides that such funding is available until transferred and that \$350,000,000 is the amount of this additional new budget authority for Interior for FY 2024.

- 2. *Provided*, That such amounts may be transferred to and merged with amounts made available under the headings “Department of Agriculture-Forest Service-Wildland Fire Management” and “Department of the Interior-Department-Wide Programs-Wildland Fire Management” for wildfire suppression operations in the fiscal year in which such amounts are transferred:**

This language provides that the amount of additional new budget authority for Interior and USDA wildfire suppression operations (\$350.0 million for Interior) may be transferred to and merged with suppression operations funding provided in the same fiscal year through the Wildland Fire Management appropriation.

- 3. *Provided further*, That amounts may be transferred to the “Wildland Fire Management” accounts in the Department of Agriculture or the Department of the Interior only upon the notification to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations that all wildfire suppression operations funds appropriated under that heading in this and prior appropriations Acts to the agency to which the funds will be transferred will be obligated within 30 days:**

This language requires that, before this funding is transferred to the Wildland Fire Management account of the Department of the Interior (or USDA, likewise), the Department must notify both the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations that all funding for suppression operations appropriated under the Wildland Fire Management appropriations heading in FY 2024 or prior years will be obligated within 30 days of the notification.

- 4. *Provided further*, That the transfer authority provided under this heading is in addition to any other transfer authority provided by law.**

This language provides that the transfer authority under this heading is in addition to any other transfer authority available to Interior.

5. ***Provided further, That, in determining whether all wildfire suppression operations funds appropriated under the heading “Wildland Fire Management” in this and prior appropriations Acts to either the Department of Agriculture or the Department of the Interior will be obligated within 30 days pursuant to the preceding proviso, any funds transferred or permitted to be transferred pursuant to any other transfer authority provided by law shall be excluded.***

This language provides that any funds transferred or permitted to be transferred pursuant to any transfer authority other than the authority provided under this Reserve Fund shall be excluded for the purposes of determining whether all wildfire suppression operations funds appropriated for “Wildland Fire Management” in this and prior appropriations laws will be obligated within 30 days of the notification to Congress described in #3, above.

Justification of Fixed Costs

Table 9: Justification of Fixed Costs
Wildland Fire Management
(Dollars In Thousands)

Fixed Cost Element	2023 Enacted Total or Change	2023 Enacted to 2024 Request Change	Description
Change in Number of Paid Days	-2,131	+2,644	This column reflects changes in pay associated with the change in the number of paid days between 2023 and 2024. The year 2024 has one day more than 2023.
Pay Raise	+22,149	+33,327	The President's Budget for FY 2024 includes one quarter of the 4.6% pay raise for 2023 and three quarters of a planned 5.2% pay raise for 2024.
Employer Share of Federal Employee Retirement System (FERS)	+0	+1,144	This column reflects no budgeted increase to the employer contribution to the Federal Employee Retirement System and a 0.6% increase to the employer contribution for the Law Enforcement Federal Employees Retirement System.
Departmental Working Capital Fund (WCF)	+115	+127	The change reflects the final 2024 Central Bill approved by the Working Capital Fund Consortium.
Rental Payments	+35	+14	The amounts reflect changes in the costs payable to General Services Administration (GSA) and others for office and non-office space as estimated by GSA, as well as the rental costs of other currently occupied space. These costs include building security. Costs of mandatory office relocations, i.e., relocations in cases where due to external events there is no alternative but to vacate the currently occupied space, are also included.
Account Total, Fixed Costs	+20,168	+37,256	N/A

Employee Count By Grade

Table 10: Employee Count by Grade
Office of the Secretary
Office of Wildland Fire
 (Total Employment)

Employee Count by Grade	2022 Actual	2023 Planned	2024 Request
Executive Level V	0	0	0
SES	1	1	1
Subtotal Executive Level/SES	1	1	1
SL - 00	0	1	1
ST - 00	0	0	0
Subtotal Senior Level	0	1	1
GS/GM - 15	7	8	8
GS/GM - 14	18	15	17
GS/GM - 13	9	11	11
GS - 12	1	0	0
GS - 11	2	2	2
GS - 10	0	0	0
GS - 9	0	1	1
GS - 8	0	0	0
GS - 7	0	0	0
GS - 6	0	0	0
GS - 5	0	0	0
GS - 4	0	0	0
GS - 3	0	0	0
GS - 2	0	0	0
GS - 1	0	0	0
Subtotal General Schedule	37	37	39
Other Pay Schedule Systems	0	0	0
Total employment (actuals & estimates)	38	39	41

This exhibit only displays personnel counts in the Office of Wildland Fire (OWF). The Wildland Fire Management appropriation funds thousands of firefighters and support personnel who are not shown in this table. Those personnel are included in the "Employee Count by Grade" exhibits in the BIA, BLM, FWS, and NPS budget justifications.

Section 403 Compliance

**Table 11: Section 403 Compliance
Wildland Fire Management
External Administrative Costs**
(Dollars In Thousands)

External Administrative Costs

Description of Assessment	Bureau	Preparedness	Suppression	Fuels	BAR	Basis
Human Resource Fire Program Support	BIA	\$ 785	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	BIA Fire HR Program
Centrally Funded Initiatives includes Working Capital Fund Direct and Central Bill and BLM Director's Priorities	BLM	\$ 6,428	\$ 0	\$ 3,246	\$ 0	Share of total BLM appropriated funds
National Operations Center (Procurement, HR, IT, data management services centrally provided for entire agency)	BLM	\$ 965	\$ 0	\$ 2,303	\$ 0	FTEs
Headquarters Support (General headquarters oversight, external affairs, IT, law enforcement, EEO, HR, resources, business practices)	BLM	\$ 1,845	\$ 0	\$ 71	\$ 217	Evaluation of support needed for subactivity
User Pay Cost Share: The non-resource management cost share collects costs from multiple, distributed accounts. The funds collected are used to pay Service-wide charges that cannot easily be attributed to a specific program or subactivity.	FWS	\$ 2,900	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	Percentage based on FTE
Enterprise-Wide Cost Share: The Service assesses its resource management programs for costs that can be directly tracked back to users. This includes such items as software licenses, cell phone costs, ID cards and the like.	FWS	\$ 1,700	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	Percentage based on FTE
Working Capital Fund Central Bill: Costs covered include administrative and contract support for the Boise Acquisition Office related to centralized aviation contracts.	BIA	\$ 218	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	The basis for distribution of costs includes elements such as aviation cost and utilization of contract support.

External Administrative Costs (continued)

Description of Assessment	Bureau	Preparedness	Suppression	Fuels	BAR	Basis
Working Capital Fund Central Bill: Costs covered include a variety of services including mail services, safety, security, property services, building management and services, and the finance branch.	OS	\$ 560	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	The basis for distribution of costs includes elements such as FTE's and square footage.
<i>Subtotal External Administrative Costs</i>	All	\$ 15,401	\$ 0	\$ 5,620	\$ 217	N/A

Program Assessment Costs

Description of Assessment	Bureau	Preparedness	Suppression	Fuels	BAR	Basis
Office of Aircraft Services Central Bill (Administrative charges for OAS training, management, flight services, safety)	BLM	\$ 0	\$ 3,853	\$ 0	\$ 0	Flight time by subactivity
<i>Subtotal Program Assessment Costs</i>	All	\$ 0	\$ 3,853	\$ 0	\$ 0	N/A

Bureau Administrative Costs

Description of Assessment	Bureau	Preparedness	Suppression	Fuels	BAR	Basis
Preparedness Indirect for Tribal Programs	BIA	\$ 5,626	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 0	6% of Base Prep. Allocation.
Fuels Indirect for Tribal Programs	BIA	\$ 0	\$ 0	\$ 16,000	\$ 0	15% of Base and BIL Fuels / RTRL funding.
State Level Indirect (Admin support at the State, district, and field office level: procurement, HR, IT)	BLM	\$ 14,300	\$ 0	\$ 9,600	\$ 0	Indirect support costs are limited to 10% of the statewide Preparedness and Fuels base program allocations.
<i>Subtotal Bureau Administrative Costs</i>	All	\$ 19,926	\$ 0	\$ 25,600	\$ 0	N/A

Total Administrative and Assessment Costs

Description of Assessment	Bureau	Preparedness	Suppression	Fuels	BAR
<i>Total Assessments and Reserves</i>	All	\$ 35,327	\$ 3,853	\$ 31,220	\$ 217

Bipartisan Infrastructure Law FY 2024 Spend Plan

Introduction

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL), provides the Department of the Interior \$1.458 billion to improve the wildland fire workforce and strengthen the resilience of communities and ecosystems to the threat of wildfire by making historic investments in the wildland fire management workforce, forest and rangeland restoration, hazardous fuels management, science, technology to improve the early detection of wildfires, and post-wildfire restoration activities. For FY 2022, \$407.6 million was made available. For FY 2023, \$262.6 million was made available. For each year from FY 2024 through FY 2026, \$262.6 million will become available. The BIL funding for wildland fire management is available until expended.

This spend plan responds to a requirement in BIL (Public Law 117-58), which states:

“Sec. 601. Not later than 90 days after the date of enactment of this Act, the Secretary of the Interior shall submit to the House and Senate Committees on Appropriations a detailed spend plan for the funds provided to the Department of the Interior in this title in this Act for fiscal year 2022, and for each fiscal year through 2026, as part of the annual budget submission of the President under section 1105(a) of title 31, United States Code, the Secretary of the Interior shall submit a detailed spend plan for the funds provided to the Department of the Interior in this title in this Act for that fiscal year.”

Program Summary

BIL provides Interior funding for the following wildland fire purposes:

- \$245 million for Preparedness for the wildland fire workforce, including increased compensation, conversions to permanent positions, and training and workforce development; information and technology investments for satellite and other detection and monitoring; and a pilot program to provide financial assistance to local governments and tribal nations for slip-on tankers to operate vehicles as fire engines;
- \$878 million for Fuels Management to support mechanical thinning and prescribed fire; establish fuel breaks and other control locations; and employ contractors, young adults, veterans, and tribal youth;
- \$325 million for Burned Area Rehabilitation to complete post-fire rehabilitation, mitigate the damaging effects of wildfires, and set landscapes on a path towards natural recovery and resilience; and
- \$10 million for the Joint Fire Science Program that Interior administers with USDA.

The enacted amounts, by actual or planned apportionments for each fiscal year, are shown in the following table:

**Table 12: Bipartisan Infrastructure Law Funding
Wildland Fire Management
by Year of Availability**

Enacted Amounts Available
(Dollars in Thousands)

Activity/Subactivity	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	All Years
Preparedness	75,940	100,000	25,000	22,030	22,030	245,000
Fuels Management	252,560	126,886	186,886	155,834	155,834	878,000
Other Operations: Burned Area Rehabilitation	76,000	33,714	48,714	83,286	83,286	325,000
Other Operations: Joint Fire Science Program	3,100	2,000	2,000	1,450	1,450	10,000
Total, Wildland Fire Management	407,600	262,600	262,600	262,600	262,600	1,458,000

Note: Figures reflect amounts made available in the fiscal year, not estimated allocations or obligations. Amounts are before transfers to the Office of Inspector General (0.5 percent of all appropriations) and FWS's Ecological Services office.

Preparedness

BIL provides Interior a total of \$245.0 million over five years for Preparedness. Of this total, \$120.0 million is available to increase the compensation of federal wildland firefighters and convert more firefighters to permanent, year-round employment. BIL directs Interior and the USDA Forest Service to increase compensation for firefighters and work with OPM to establish a wildland firefighter occupational series.

The other \$125.0 million in BIL Preparedness funding available over five years is for other activities that will increase America's preparedness to respond to wildfire. They include support for workshops and training for firefighters, equipment, satellite detection and reporting, wildfire detection and monitoring, and a pilot program to support tribal nations and local governments in wildfire response through the acquisition of slip-on tanker units.

FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

The Department of the Interior:

- Allocated a total \$75.6 million for preparedness activities authorized by BIL.
- Worked with USDA Forest Service to provide special pay supplements to thousands of eligible federal wildland firefighters (3,800 in Interior), retroactive to October 1, 2021, using BIL preparedness funding.
- Established a new federal wildland firefighter occupational series with USDA Forest Service and OPM.
- Launched a joint wildland firefighter mental health program with USDA Forest Service. (See also the "Preparedness" section of the 2024 budget request.)

- Coordinated with HHS/CDC's National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health on a wildland firefighter health and wellbeing assessment, in conjunction with USDA Forest Service.
- Allocated funding to launch the BIL-authorized pilot program for Interior to provide local governments and tribes with financial assistance to purchase slip-on tanker units to operate vehicles as fire engines.
- Allocated funding to expand firefighter training and contract for a comprehensive competency gap analysis to inform training and career development opportunities.

FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

The Department of the Interior:

- Allocated an additional \$31.2 million in November 2022, including \$30.0 million more for special pay supplements for the first six months of FY 2023 (see also the bullet below).
- Is continuing special pay supplements to thousands of eligible federal wildland firefighters. Interior amended the FY 2023 spend plan in light of the need to spend more on firefighters' compensation in 2023 than anticipated when Interior transmitted the President's 2023 budget request to Congress. An estimated \$60.0 million of the Preparedness funding available for FY 2023 will go to pay the second year of these special pay supplements. Interior anticipates that the appropriations available for these special pay supplements will be depleted by the end of FY 2023. The President's 2024 budget requests funding and new authorizing legislation to permanently increase federal and tribal wildland firefighters' compensation beginning in October 2023 (the start of FY 2024).
- From the remaining \$40.0 million apportioned for Preparedness for FY 2023, will allocate funding for other BIL preparedness initiatives, including initial funding for satellite detection in conjunction with DOC/NOAA and the USDA Forest Service, for wildfire detection and monitoring, and for radio interoperability.
- Will procure services for a competency model and gap analysis to identify core competencies and gaps for federal wildland fire personnel.
- Will expand investments in information technology through which wildland fire personnel train.
- Will implement the new federal wildland firefighter occupational series established in 2022 with USDA Forest Service and OPM.
- Will continue working with USDA Forest Service on the new joint mental health program, with a focus in Phase 1 of filling critical positions to build capacity. An HHS Public Health Service officer is detailed to Interior to facilitate implementation of the departments' plans. The departments also will host a mental health summit in spring 2023. (See also the "Preparedness" section of the 2024 budget request.)
- Will take steps with USDA Forest Service to reduce exposure to line-of-duty environmental hazards.
- Will launch the BIL-authorized pilot program for Interior to provide local governments and tribes with financial assistance to purchase slip-on tanker units to operate vehicles as fire engines, including issuing one or more Notice(s) of Funding Opportunity. Based on responses to the Notice(s) of Funding Opportunity, Interior anticipates making some awards during FY 2023.

- Will allocate funding for BIL’s radio interoperability provision and plan for an initial acquisition during FY 2023. Interior is working through NMAC and incident management team communications leaders to identify equipment needs.

FY 2024 Planned Activities

The Department of the Interior:

- Will allocate additional funding for BIL preparedness activities, including additional funding for satellite detection in conjunction with DOC/NOAA and the USDA Forest Service, for wildfire detection and monitoring, and for radio interoperability.
- Will continue working with USDA Forest Service on the new joint mental health initiative, with a focus in Phase 2 on program development, leveraging resources, and filling needs identified in Phase 1 (which is beginning in FY 2023). (See also the “Preparedness” section of the 2024 budget request.)
- Will evaluate the response to the initial round(s) of slip-on tanker pilot program funding opportunities and determine how much additional funding to allocate.
- Anticipates that the appropriations available for the BIL special pay supplements will be depleted by the end of FY 2023. The President’s 2024 budget requests funding and new authorizing legislation to permanently increase federal and tribal wildland firefighters’ compensation beginning in October 2023 (the start of FY 2024).

Fuels Management

The BIL provides Interior a total of \$878.0 million over five years for Fuels Management. Of this total:

- \$250.0 million is available for planning and conducting prescribed fires and related activities;
- \$250.0 million is available for developing or improving potential control locations, including fuelbreaks;
- \$100.0 million is available for conducting mechanical thinning and timber harvesting in an ecologically appropriate manner or precommercial thinning in young growth stands for wildlife habitat benefits to provide subsistence resources;
- \$100.0 million is available for contracting or employing crews of laborers to modify and remove flammable vegetation on federal land and for using materials from treatments, to the extent practicable, to produce biochar and other innovative wood products, including through the use of existing locally based organizations that engage young adults, tribal youth, and veterans in service projects; and
- \$178.0 million is available for other fuels management work.

FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

The Department of the Interior:

- Allocated a total \$81.6 million for fuels management.
- Treated nearly 190,000 acres of BIL-funded fuels management projects.
- Provided Congress with a BIL-required five-year Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan that includes Interior’s long-term plans for using fuels management to reduce wildfire risk and mitigate its impacts.

- Allocated funding for an Interior-USDA Forest Service agreement with the National Association of State Foresters (NASF) for further development of a geospatial mapping tool to display various wildland fire partners' fuels treatments and facilitate better coordination of treatments among stakeholders across broad landscapes. Both Interior and USDA Forest Service are providing funding to NASF for this purpose.
- Allocated funding to FWS's Ecological Services office to expand its capacity to provide Endangered Species Act compliance services for the Wildland Fire Management program's BIL fuels management projects.
- Allocated funding to USGS to fund a science initiative that monitors fuels management projects to determine their long-term efficacy at reducing wildfire risk.

FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

The Department of the Interior:

- Allocated another \$175.7 million for fuels management in November 2022, allowing for fall prescribed fire implementation and providing time to build capacity by hiring additional staff and entering into new contracts to increase the amount of work.
- Plans to treat nearly 800,000 acres (estimate) of BIL-funded fuels management projects.
- Will allocate additional funding for BIL fuels management activities later in FY 2023.
- Is continuing to increase implementation of BIL-funded thinning, prescribed fire, installation of fuelbreaks and other potential control locations, and other removal of flammable vegetation.
- Is partnering with the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) and USDA Forest Service to support tribal outreach and workforce, with emphases on fuels management and post-fire rehabilitation. Both Interior and USDA Forest Service are providing funding to ITC for these purposes.
- Requested a lower apportionment of 2023 funding for Fuels Management than was planned at the time of the release of the President's 2023 budget because of the (1) need to fund firefighter compensation increases for 2023 and (2) availability of unobligated balances from FY 2022 to support work in FY 2023.
- Through an agreement funded by Interior and USDA Forest Service, NASF will develop a tool to promote shared stewardship of lands to reduce wildfire risk, increase sharing of relevant information on wildland fire management plans and activities, and enhance collaboration among wildland fire partners.
- In coordination with USDA Forest Service, will submit a BIL-required annual report to Congress on the number of acres of land on which projects carried out using the BIL's treatment funds improved the Fire Regime Condition Class.
- In coordination with USDA Forest Service, will submit a 2022 BIL-required annual report to Congress showing that projects carried out using BIL treatment funds improved the Fire Regime Condition Class on 77,000 acres of Interior-administered lands.

FY 2024 Planned Activities

The Department of the Interior:

- Will request an increased apportionment of BIL funding for Fuels Management compared with FY 2023 as the capacity to efficiently and effectively expand these initiatives is achieved.

- Will allocate additional funding for BIL fuels management activities.
- In coordination with USDA Forest Service and NASF, will begin to utilize the newly developed tool to promote shared stewardship of lands to reduce wildfire risk, increase sharing of relevant information on wildland fire management plans and activities, and enhance collaboration among wildland fire partners.
- In coordination with USDA Forest Service, will submit a BIL-required annual report to Congress on the number of acres of land on which projects carried out using the BIL's treatment funds improved the Fire Regime Condition Class.

Burned Area Rehabilitation

BIL provides Interior a total of \$325.0 million over five years for Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR). These funds will support post-fire rehabilitation, mitigate the damaging effects of wildfires, and set landscapes on a path toward natural recovery and resilience.

FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

The Department of the Interior:

- Approved allocations totaling \$19.7 million for post-fire rehabilitation and recovery efforts.
- Allocated funding to the FWS's Ecological Services office to expand its capacity to provide Endangered Species Act compliance services for the Wildland Fire Management program's BIL BAR projects.
- Allocated funding to USGS to develop a biotic crust field guide.

FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

The Department of the Interior:

- Approved allocations totaling another \$18.9 million for post-fire rehabilitation and recovery in November 2022, including funding to increase the number of contracting officers to facilitate BAR implementation.
- Will allocate additional funding for BIL BAR activities later in FY 2023.
- Is using BIL funding available early in the fiscal year to implement time-sensitive post-fire seeding that could not be funded fully with appropriations available during the portion of the year covered by FY 2023 Continuing Resolutions.
- Through USGS, will expand support for emergency assessment of post-fire debris-flow hazards – such as the one completed for the 2021 KNP Complex Fire that burned through Sequoia & Kings Canyon National Parks.
- Is partnering with ITC and USDA Forest Service to support Tribal outreach and workforce, with emphases on fuels management and post-fire rehabilitation. Both Interior and USDA Forest Service are providing funding to ITC for these purposes.
- Will expand cross-boundary collaboration within Interior and with USDA Forest Service and non-federal partners including tribal nations—investing in infrastructure, plant materials, monitoring, and evaluation necessary to accelerate the pace and scale of rehabilitation and enhance program effectiveness.

- Requested a lower apportionment of 2023 funding for BAR than was planned at the time of the release of the President’s 2023 budget because of the (1) need to fund firefighter compensation increases for 2023 and (2) availability of unobligated balances from FY 2022 to support work in FY 2023.

FY 2024 Planned Activities

The Department of the Interior:

- Will request an increased apportionment of BIL funding for BAR compared with FY 2023 as capacity to efficiently and effectively expand these initiatives is achieved.
- Will allocate additional funding for BIL BAR activities.

Joint Fire Science Program

BIL provides Interior and USDA Forest Service a total of \$10.0 million each over five years for the Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP), which Interior co-funds and co-administers with the USDA Forest Service. JFSP is targeting BIL projects that can be initiated promptly. The funding will primarily support research projects conducted by university and college researchers and other research institutions, occasionally with partnerships between universities and Federal researchers.

Consistent with the JFSP prospectus process, subject matter expert panels review and rate JFSP research projects. They recommend priority projects to an interagency board comprising senior managers and scientists from Interior and the USDA Forest Service. The research projects are inherently collaborative efforts. Results are disseminated through the Fire Science Exchange Network, which brings together local, state, tribal, and federal researchers and managers from the Interior bureaus, multiple USDA agencies, DOC/NOAA, DOC National Institute of Standards and Technology, DOD, EPA, and NASA. There is a potential to further enhance coordination through the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the National Science Foundation, and the National Academies.

FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

The Department of the Interior:

- Allocated \$3.1 million for initial JFSP research grants using BIL funding, on topics such as firefighters’ wellness, wildfire risk, and climate change.

FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

The Department of the Interior:

- Posted Notices of Funding Opportunity for JFSP research grants to be funded by BIL. Applications were due in December 2022. Later in FY 2023, Interior expects to post additional Notices of Funding Opportunity for JFSP research grants to be funded by BIL.
- Allocated an additional \$2.0 million for JFSP cooperative agreements and interagency agreements.
- By the end of FY 2023, plans to have completed at least three (estimate) JFSP BIL-funded research projects and to have conducted a review of how to use the BIL funding to fully support the law’s purposes in future years.

FY 2024 Planned Activities

The Department of the Interior:

- Will allocate additional funding (expected to be another \$2.0 million) for BIL JFSP research agreements.
- Will post additional Notices of Funding Opportunity for JFSP research agreements to be funded by BIL.
- By the end of FY 2024, plans to have completed several more JFSP BIL-funded research projects.

Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission

BIL authorizes Interior, USDA Forest Service, and DHS/FEMA to establish a Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission. The Commission is required by law to provide Congress a report with recommendations to prevent, mitigate, suppress, and manage wildland fires and rehabilitate lands following wildfires. The recommendations are to prioritize maximizing the protection of human life, community water supplies, homes, and other essential structures; facilitating efficient short- and long-term forest management in residential and nonresidential at-risk areas; and addressing other important topics such as how to improve the capacity of the Secretary of Agriculture and the Secretary of the Interior to conduct hazardous fuels reduction projects. The recommendations also will address post-fire rehabilitation and recovery.

FY 2022 Activities and Accomplishments

The Department of the Interior, in conjunction with USDA Forest Service and DHS/FEMA:

- Established the Commission in December 2021.
- Named Commission members in July 2022.
- Held the first meeting of the Commission in September 2022.
- Established a website for public to submit comments and ideas to the Commission.

FY 2023 Planned Activities and Milestones

The Department of the Interior, in conjunction with USDA and DHS FEMA:

- Hosted the second meeting of the Commission in January 2023 and will participate in subsequent meetings quarterly.
- Will respond to Commission requests for information.
- Will facilitate preparation of the Commission's reports, which are required by September 2023.

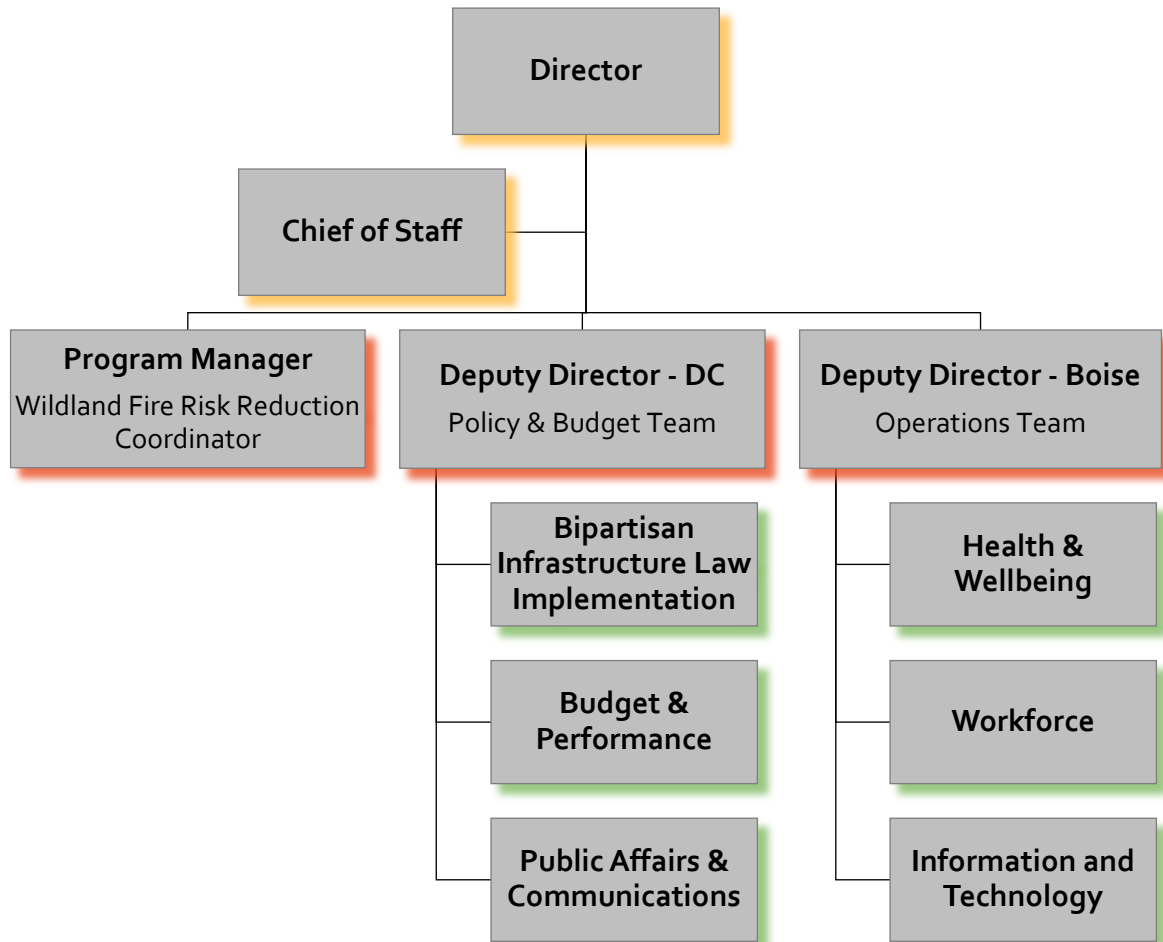
In February 2023, the Commission released a report outlining a strategy to meet aerial firefighting equipment needs through 2030.

FY 2024 Planned Activities

The Commission will disband within 180 days of the issuance of its required reports, as authorized by BIL. Interior and its partners will consider the Commission's recommendations and plan how to implement them.

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Appendix A – Organization Chart, Office of Wildland Fire



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Appendix B – Lists of Key Tables and Figures

List of Key Tables

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Appendix C – References

Key Acronyms

BAR	Burned Area Rehabilitation
BIA	Bureau of Indian Affairs
BLM	Bureau of Land Management
FSEN	Fire Science Exchange Network
FTE	Full-Time Equivalent (employees; except where noted, refers to federal personnel)
FWS	U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
FY	Fiscal Year (time span from October of one year through September of the next; the federal fiscal year begins three months before the corresponding calendar year)
GACC	Geographic Area Coordination Center
GRIN	Graduate Research Innovation program
JFSP	Joint Fire Science Program
NPS	National Park Service
OWF	Office of Wildland Fire
P.L.	Public Law (U.S. federal law)
RTRL	Reserved Treaty Rights Lands
USDA	U.S. Department of Agriculture
WFIT	Wildland Fire Information and Technology
WFLC	Wildland Fire Leadership Council
WFM	Wildland Fire Management
WUI	Wildland-Urban Interface

Acknowledgements

Data and graphics used throughout this justification have been sourced from the following:

- Program Graphics
 - Preparedness, Suppression Operations, Fuels Management, Burned Area Rehabilitation: Luis Prado/Noun Project
 - Facilities: Graphic Engineer/Noun Project
- Forests and Rangelands – The National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy: <https://www.forestsandrangelands.gov/strategy/>
- The National Interagency Fire Center: <https://www.nifc.gov/>
- The National Interagency Coordination Center – Predictive Services: <https://www.predictiveservices.nifc.gov/>
- Wildfire Risk to Communities: <https://wildfirerisk.org/>

For more information on Interior’s Wildland Fire Management budget, go to <https://www.doi.gov/wildlandfire/budget>