



As the stewards of so many of our Nation’s public lands, we know that our forests, rangelands, and grasslands are essential to the health, well-being, and prosperity of families and communities across America. From the bounty of the Great Plains and vast coastal forests to the high deserts of the Southwest and beyond, our lands and waters define who we are and who we, as a Nation, want to be.

The past several decades have shown us, however, that an increasingly changing climate is fueling fire disasters. Climate change is driving the devastating intersection of extreme heat, drought, and wildland fire danger across the United States, creating wildfires that move with a speed and intensity previously unseen. This has created conditions in which wildfires overwhelm response capabilities, resulting economic losses in the billions of dollars, damage to natural resources, devastation to communities, and the tragic loss of human life.

As the primary Federal organizations responsible for managing the Nation’s Federal forests and rangelands, the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have worked collaboratively for many years to manage our lands together as one landscape—especially to address catastrophic wildfire risks that recognize no agency boundaries. We remain steadfast in our commitment to wildland fire preparedness, mitigation, and resilience and to working with our many Federal and non-Federal partners to reduce wildfire risk across landscapes.

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) includes historic investments to help us fulfill this commitment through hazardous-fuels management and post-wildfire restoration activities across America’s forests, rangelands, and grasslands. These investments will guide us in promoting climate resiliency across landscapes and communities, modernizing the firefighter workforce while creating good jobs, and protecting the safety and long-term well-being of our wildland firefighters.

A central component of the DOI and USDA collaboration is the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy, prepared jointly with Tribal Nation, State, local, and nongovernmental partners, which articulates our shared goals of (1) restoring fire-adapted ecosystems on a landscape scale; (2) building fire-adapted human communities; and (3) responding effectively to wildland fire. We are also guided by President Biden’s direction in Executive Order 14008, entitled “Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad,” to work every day to make our Nation more resilient in the face of ever-worsening wildfires, droughts, floods, extreme heat, and other risks to livelihoods that are exacerbated by climate change.

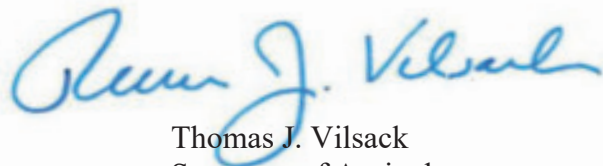
And now, with the release of this DOI 5-year plan, coupled with the U.S. Forest Service's 10-year wildfire crisis strategy, we are building on the vision and goals of the cohesive strategy, adding cutting edge science, and outlining our shared commitment to responsibly and expeditiously implement the historic investments provided in the BIL. Taken together, these plans illustrate the targeted high-risk areas that are a priority for wildfire mitigation attention; our commitment to supporting our wildland firefighters through science, technology, training, and workforce reforms; and our intent to support communities recovering after fires through ecosystem restoration work to set landscapes on a path toward natural recovery and climate resilience.

Throughout these efforts, we will continue to prioritize coordination across the Federal family and with our Tribal, State, and local community partners. We know that we must act decisively to improve the health and resilience of our forests, rangelands, and grasslands, and to protect people and communities at risk. Through collaborative efforts and by working with Tribes, States, local communities, private and family landowners, and public and private sector partners—across jurisdictional boundaries—we can restore fire-adapted ecosystems across shared landscapes and meaningfully change the trajectory of wildfire risk to people, communities, and natural resources.

We look forward to working together and with our partners to implement this important work.

A blue ink signature of Deb Haaland, written in a cursive style.

Deb Haaland
Secretary of the Interior

A blue ink signature of Thomas J. Vilsack, written in a cursive style.

Thomas J. Vilsack
Secretary of Agriculture

U.S. Department of the Interior
Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
Wildfire Risk Five-Year Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan

April 2022

Introduction

American communities continue to bear the brunt of droughts, wildfires, flooding, and other climate-driven disasters. Wildfires have been growing in intensity and number, adversely impacting air quality, contaminating drinking water, destroying important fish and wildlife habitat, and causing billions of dollars in damages to homes and infrastructure.

On November 15, 2021, President Biden signed into law the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, also known as the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL). The law provides historic, long-term investments in the infrastructure and economy of the United States, including more than \$5 billion directed to the U.S. Department of the Interior (DOI) and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to reduce the risk of catastrophic wildfires.

The BIL provides a transformative opportunity for DOI and USDA to modernize their wildland fire workforce and increase the pace and scale of fuels management and ecosystem restoration across Federal and Tribal Nation lands. In particular, section 40803(j)(1) of the BIL directs DOI and USDA to establish a Five-Year Wildfire Monitoring, Maintenance, and Treatment Plan that:

- Reduces severe fire risk on 10 million acres of Federal land, Tribal forest lands, and rangeland that pose a high wildfire hazard.
- Develops a process for prioritizing treatments in areas and communities at the highest risk of catastrophic wildfire in direct partnership with state and local entities and affected stakeholders.
- Leverages public-private partnerships; prioritizes projects that have been evaluated under the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and are ready for implementation; streamlines subsequent projects based on existing statutory or regulatory authorities; and develops interagency teams to increase coordination and efficiency under NEPA.

The BIL acknowledges the important, long-standing partnership between DOI and USDA, agencies that have historically worked collaboratively across landscapes to address catastrophic wildfire risks that do not recognize agency boundaries. These lands include USDA's National Forest System lands and lands administered by DOI's four land management agencies: the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and the National Park Service (NPS).

To ensure continued collaboration, DOI and USDA, along with Tribal Nations, states, local agencies, and non-governmental partners, jointly prepared the *National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy* (Cohesive Strategy), which articulates the shared goals of (1) restoring fire-adapted ecosystems on a

landscape scale; (2) building fire-adapted human communities; and (3) responding safely and effectively to wildland fire. In addition, through Executive Order 14008, *Tackling the Climate Crisis at Home and Abroad*, President Biden challenged the agencies to double down on these collaborative efforts to make the Nation more resilient in the face of ever-worsening wildfires, droughts, floods, extreme heat, and other risks to lives and livelihoods that are exacerbated by climate change.

In response to this imperative, and consistent with Congress's direction in the BIL, DOI and USDA are continuing to work together to coordinate and apply approaches to wildfire risk reduction that support the vision and goals of the Cohesive Strategy. To help advance this joint work, USDA released the Forest Service's 10-Year Wildfire Crisis Strategy, which outlines that agency's plans to treat up to 20 million acres of National Forest System lands in Fireshed areas, which are primarily forested landscapes that pose serious wildfire risks to homes, communities, and infrastructure. As noted by Secretaries Vilsack and Haaland in a January 18, 2022, joint letter accompanying the release of the 10-Year Strategy, both agencies will work together to target high-risk areas for priority wildfire mitigation, including work performed under the historic BIL.

DOI's Five-Year Plan complements USDA's 10-Year Strategy in emphasizing fire-prone DOI and Tribal lands comprising up to 30 million additional acres. These include rangelands and other vegetative ecosystems that pose serious fire risks.

DOI will continue to work with USDA to build partnerships, use existing resources, and invest in technologies and tools that are needed to better inform risk and empower stakeholders to make collaborative decisions that protect people, communities, and resources from the risks of wildfire. This will facilitate a collaborative, multijurisdictional approach to reducing wildfire risk over broad landscapes. Additionally, DOI will look for opportunities to improve efficiencies, use existing statutory and administrative authorities, and leverage processes to increase the pace and scale of priority fuel management treatments.



Photo 1. A FWS prescribed fire at the Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida. Photo by Brian Pippin, FWS.

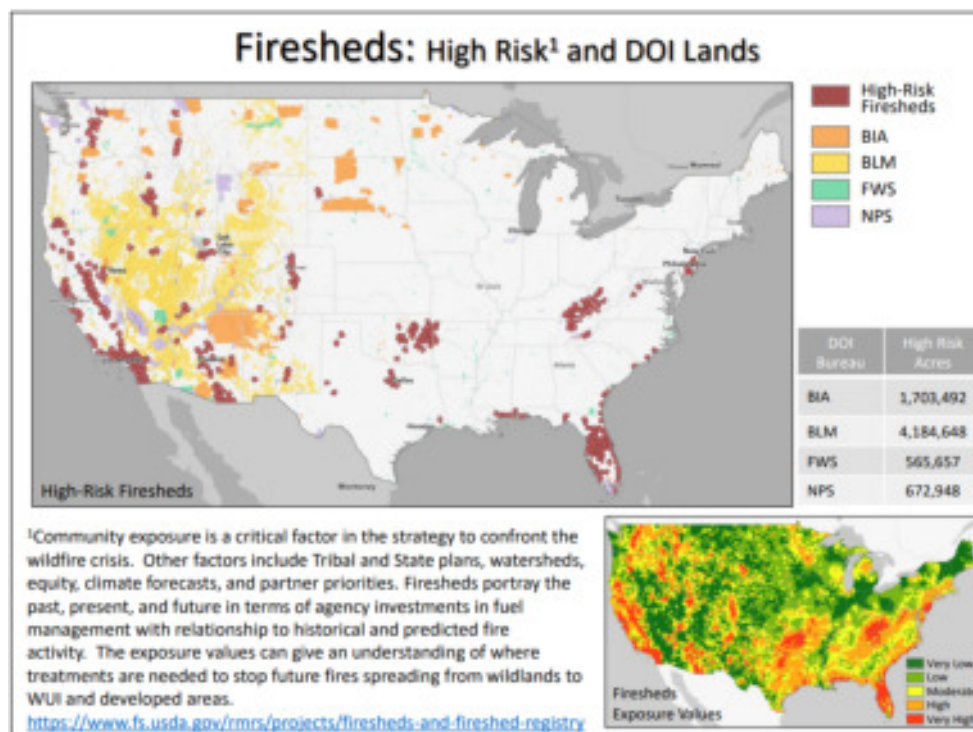
Together, USDA's 10-Year Strategy and DOI's Five-Year Plan will inform the development of a joint USDA and DOI long-term, outcome-based monitoring, maintenance, and treatment strategy that is required by Section 40803(j)(2) of the BIL by 2026 focused on:

- Maintaining forest health improvements and wildfire risk reduction accomplishments.
- Continuing treatments at levels necessary to address the 20 million acres that need priority treatment.
- Proactively conducting treatments at a level necessary to minimize the risk of wildfire to surrounding at-risk communities.

I. Reducing Wildfire Risk

Fuel Management Treatments

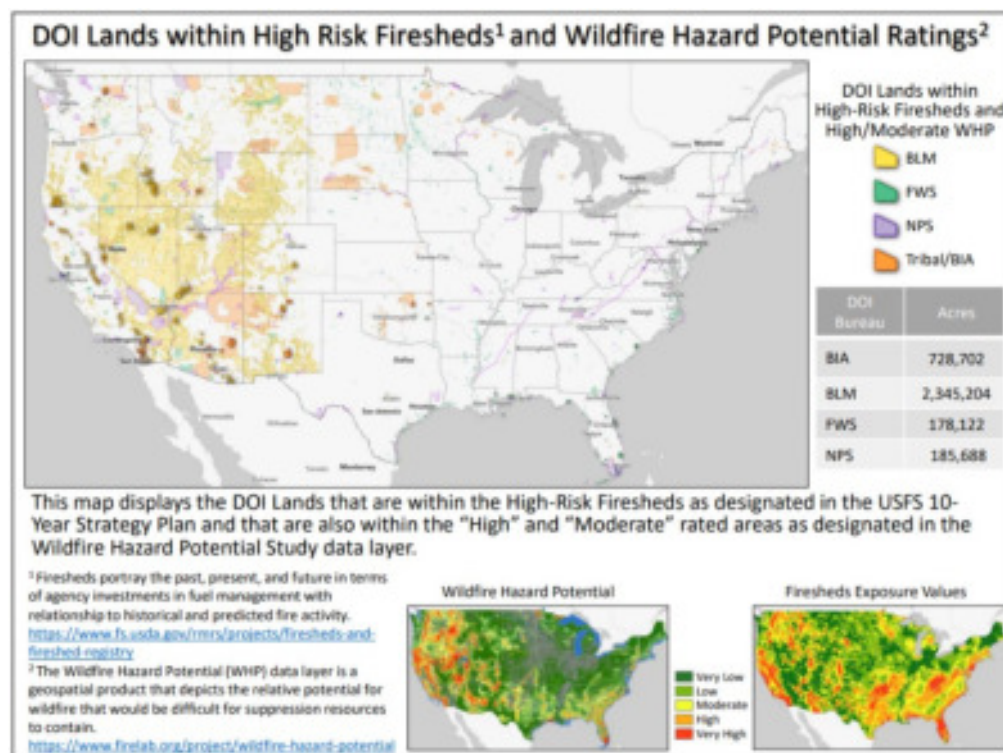
DOI's fuel management work focuses on creating fire-adapted and climate-resilient ecosystems across the Nation's vast rural areas. DOI hazardous fuel projects focus on mitigating wildfire risk across diverse vegetative types to meet multiple objectives, including fish and wildlife habitat improvements, forest and rangeland restoration, the protection of endangered species, recreation, and other needs. The protection of these areas is also essential to ensuring the long-term economic and social viability of many western communities. As Map 1 illustrates, approximately 7.1 million acres of land administered by DOI have been identified as having a very high or high likelihood of exposure to wildfires.



Map 1. High-risk Firesheds and DOI lands.

To address the wildfire risk on these lands, DOI will strive to achieve a total of two million acres of hazardous fuel treatments in fiscal year (FY) 2022. This represents a 30 percent increase in treated acres over the FY 2021 accomplished level, including an increase of up to approximately 250,000 acres of treatments using BIL funds.

USDA's 10-Year Strategy highlights a much-needed paradigm shift in wildland fire management. Moving from small-scale treatments managed by individual entities to prioritizing landscape-level treatments in collaboration with a suite of partners, including DOI, will reduce the trajectory of wildfire risk to communities and natural resources. DOI is a committed partner with the USDA Forest Service in supporting a portion of the additional 30 million acres of fuel treatments beyond the 20 million acres of National Forest System lands that are identified for treatment by USDA. A total of 3.4 million acres of DOI-administered lands with high to moderate wildfire hazard potential are within the high-risk Firesheds identified in USDA's 10-Year Strategy.



Map 2. DOI lands with high risk Firesheds and wildfire hazard potential ratings.

The objectives of DOI's Fuels Management Program include:

- Integration with Resource Management – Proposed projects must demonstrate how they drive key natural resource benefits through an integrated, programmatic approach that incorporates active vegetation management through integrated resource planning to achieve wildland fire management goals and objectives.

- Stewardship-Based – Proposed projects have shared stewardship values demonstrated by joint, mutually-agreed-upon priorities with partners at all levels that includes the coordination of assets, skills, and resources.
- Geographic Landscape-Based – Proposed projects contribute to a landscape-based approach to achieve mutually-agreed-upon active management goals and objectives that are coordinated locally.
- Outcome Based – Proposed projects are strategically placed and designed to achieve the following objectives:
 - Mitigate significant wildfire risk to DOI and Tribal values, including to public safety.
 - Protect, maintain, or improve resiliency to wildfire.
 - Meet bureaus' statutory obligations for wildland fire management responsibilities.

In FYs 2022 and 2023, DOI bureaus will use expanded three-year programs of work to identify projects consistent with program and BIL objectives. As described below, in subsequent years, DOI plans to continue developing and expanding the use of resources and tools to help guide bureaus and stakeholders in jointly identifying and planning multijurisdictional, landscape-scale projects that further support the goals and objectives of BIL.



Photo 2. A FWS prescribed fire at the Camas National Wildlife Refuge in Idaho. Photo by FWS.

Monitoring Hazardous Fuels Management Effectiveness

In the short-term, DOI will leverage science and research supported by the U.S. Geological Survey (USGS) to help prioritize and inform shovel-ready projects. This includes cataloging those projects that have completed assessments as required by NEPA and other applicable statutes and creating a database of existing wildfire risk and prioritization assessments. Together, these actions will facilitate easy access to information and enable bureaus to efficiently plan and carry out priority hazardous fuel management work.

Over the long-term, DOI will leverage USGS and bureau monitoring assessments that use remote sensing, lidar, and 3D technologies to inform DOI's efforts and progress toward meeting hazardous fuel reduction objectives, including vegetation change and recovery, improving fire regime condition classes, and enhancing overall ecosystem health. This includes assessments of fire behavior to help evaluate treatment effectiveness, longevity, and the impacts on future wildfire behavior. It will allow land managers, decision makers, and stakeholders to apply current data and models on climate and carbon changes to the planning, maintenance, and monitoring of fuel treatments.

These efforts will support the ongoing adaptation and management of Firesheds and support additional planning tools, including LANDFIRE and the Wildfire Risk Geospatial Mitigation Planning model discussed below.

Maintaining Investments

Over the past decade, DOI has invested more than \$2 billion in hazardous fuel management treatments to protect communities and ecosystems. As vegetation continues to grow, maintaining this investment in areas where DOI has successfully reduced wildfire risk is an important component of DOI's long-term success. As DOI completes treatments in new areas, it will prioritize protection and maintenance of those investments in pre-wildfire risk reduction, post-fire hazard mitigation, and ecosystem restoration. Additionally, DOI will explore opportunities with USGS to produce an analytical tool to help assess the critical maintenance requirements for certain types of hazardous fuel treatments, including mechanical thinning and prescribed fire.

II. Partnerships

Strategic Coordination

Interagency wildland fire management is coordinated through numerous collaborative groups that interact at the Federal, Tribal, state, and local levels and engage stakeholders in wildland fire management issues. Each provides a unique perspective on wildland fire management and support for an integrated approach to addressing wildfire risk, including implementing both the USDA 10-Year Strategy and DOI Five-Year Plan.

- The President's Wildfire Resilience Interagency Working Group (IWG), co-chaired by USDA, DOI, and the Office of Management and Budget (OMB), is bringing an all-of-government approach to addressing the Nation's wildfire crisis. The IWG facilitates participation and expertise from across the administration to coordinate strategies to strengthen wildfire prevention, preparedness, mitigation, and response efforts and protect communities across the Nation from the devastating impact of wildfires.
- The Wildland Fire Leadership Council, established in 2002 by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture, is an intergovernmental committee of Federal, Tribal, state, county, and municipal partners that support the development and consistent implementation of wildland fire policies, goals, and activities.
- The BIL establishes a Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission, chaired by the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture and the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Management Agency. The commission is comprised of Federal and non-Federal stakeholders, including state, Tribal, and other partners with expertise in all aspects of wildland fire management. The Commission will make recommendations to improve Federal policies relating to the prevention, mitigation, suppression, and management of wildfire and post-wildfire rehabilitation.

The foundation of wildland fire management collaboration will continue to be the Cohesive Strategy, which lays the groundwork for coordination between Federal, Tribal, and state land managers, as well as other stakeholders. Funding made available through the BIL increases opportunities for DOI to work collaboratively with partners to provide safe and effective wildfire response, restore and maintain landscapes, and promote and enhance fire-adapted communities—the core tenets of the Cohesive Strategy—particularly in those areas that have historically lacked the resources to invest in fire adaptation.

Tribal Nation Coordination

In January 2022, DOI hosted a series of virtual consultation sessions with Tribal Nation leaders and Alaska Native Corporations. The feedback provided during the consultations highlighted the priorities and needs of Tribal Nations to protect their communities. Following up on these priorities is essential to ensure an efficient process for implementing BIL objectives on Tribal Nation lands.



Photo 3. The Geronimo Interagency Hotshot Crew, administered by the San Carlos Apache Tribe, sets a prescribed fire. Photo by Lance Cheung, USDA.

Through BIL funding, BIA will continue to expand partnerships and collaboration on Reserved Treaty Rights Lands (RTRL). The development of additional RTRL collaborative projects—in which Tribes collaborate with non-Tribal landowners to improve resiliency and reduce wildfire risk to Tribal resources—respects Tribal sovereignty and enhances Tribes’ capabilities to address their priorities off existing reservation lands. RTRL projects also provide opportunities to meet the needs of all partners, including Tribal, Federal, state, and local entities. In FY 2021, over 20,250 acres were treated that met Tribal and collaborator priorities.

Similarly, the BIL authorizes the expenditure of up to \$10 million by BLM over five years to expand the Tribal Forest Protection Act (TFPA). The TFPA supports Tribally-proposed stewardship contracting or other projects on Forest Service or BLM lands that are adjacent to Tribal lands with the goal of protecting those lands from wildfire risk or other threats. The BIA, BLM, and Intertribal Timber Council are beginning preliminary planning discussions for coordinating projects with Tribal Nations. Combined with RTRL projects, this positions all partners to work together using multiple authorities to address wildfire risk on a landscape scale.

Further, to ensure that Tribal Nations have the resources necessary to effectively mitigate wildfire risk and protect important cultural values, DOI plans to increase budget support for Tribal Nations' fuels management programs. DOI will provide additional funding for Tribal Nations' contract support so that those amounts are not taken from annual allocations for fuel management treatments. DOI also will increase funding for RTRL projects.

Wildfire Risk Geospatial Mitigation Planning

Active management rooted in sound science will remain a key tool in DOI's efforts to support the wildfire risk objectives of the BIL. A growing wildfire crisis necessitates the advent of new tools and resources that further support collaborative efforts among stakeholders and promote large-scale, multijurisdictional wildfire risk reduction projects. Connecting landscape risk reduction and resilience with community risk reduction and resilience at the necessary scale is a critical part of this paradigm shift.

To meet this objective, DOI is partnering with the USDA Forest Service and the National Association of State Foresters and investing in a wildfire risk geospatial mitigation planning tool. The tool will allow stakeholders to collectively identify shared values to facilitate agreement and coordination on the prioritization of fuel management treatments based on the highest wildfire risk and the impacts on communities and infrastructure. It will help all stakeholders better understand the opportunities and gaps that exist across jurisdictional boundaries to collectively address wildfire risk before a wildfire starts. The tool will provide a mechanism to aggregate data that will help analyze the success of fuel treatments, thereby supporting adaptive management for continually improving treatments and adapting to the future.

Further, wildfire disproportionately impacts disadvantaged and underserved communities. In combination with BIL funding, this tool will support DOI and interagency efforts to better understand those impacts and how to interact with underserved and disadvantaged stakeholders to reduce wildfire risk and improve the resiliency of individual communities.

To date, the tool has been piloted in three states: Nevada, Texas, and Washington. Land management agencies from each state participated, as well as DOI bureaus and the USDA Forest Service. The pilots demonstrated that, together with stakeholders, Federal and non-Federal data can be aggregated to visualize priorities and values. This facilitates shared planning and collaborative project implementation. The tool effectively provides a platform to recognize multiple perspectives about values and wildfire

risk, shares critical information in a systematic process, and recognizes stakeholders from broad interest groups at multiple scales.

III. Planning

National Environmental Policy Act Planning Support

In addressing the fuels management needs described above, DOI will focus short-term efforts on those projects for which NEPA and other statutory review compliance have been completed, as directed by the BIL. In addition, leveraging USGS science and support, DOI will explore opportunities to create a NEPA Science and Support Team to provide direct scientific expertise to agencies by producing NEPA analyses; providing support to address other required natural, historic, and cultural resource analyses; and conducting literature reviews for hazardous fuel treatment planning activities. This will help ensure the most up-to-date state of the science is integrated into project plans.



Photo 4. A mobile app enables wildland fire managers to track the locations of personnel and vehicles on the 2021 Tamarack Fire. Photo by Brad Schmidt, USDA.

DOI will also look for efficiencies by leveraging interagency teams and increased coordination to complete NEPA compliance across DOI and in cooperation with USDA. NEPA is essential to the planning process. It allows stakeholders to have a voice in project plans and outcomes, and it requires the Federal Government to fully consider the impacts of proposed actions on communities, resources, and people. Bolstering DOI's NEPA resources and expanding coordination will facilitate collaborative efforts with stakeholders to ensure that planning is completed in a timely manner so that projects can be implemented as quickly and efficiently as possible with an appropriate level of community input.

Leveraging Existing Authorities and Resources

DOI will continue to explore opportunities to leverage partnerships and to utilize existing authorities to facilitate hazardous fuel treatments. Currently, Good Neighbor Authority (GNA), which allows state, local, and private partners to complete restoration work, including fuel management treatments, on Federal lands is only available to BLM and the USDA Forest Service. BLM has experienced an uptick in GNA agreements in recent years, and in 2021 had a total of 120 GNA agreements or contracts in place.

Congressional expansion of this authority across DOI would facilitate cross-jurisdictional, landscape-scale planning in support of the goals of BIL.

DOI will use BIL funding to increase contracting and administration capacity so that programs have the support needed to carry out critical wildland fire management work. This includes providing BIA with funding to increase Tribal Nation contract support costs and funding to BLM, FWS, and NPS to allow them to hire additional human resource and contracting personnel. This will support bureau efforts to hire additional wildland firefighters that are needed for wildfire response and to increase the pace and scale of hazardous fuel treatment efforts, along with the contracting that is needed for other critical fuel and restoration activities.

BIL investments will also allow DOI to expand staffing for professional positions that support science-based management decisions. These resources will enable bureaus to better evaluate and understand fire-evolved ecosystems and adapt mitigation and response tools as necessary to support more fire-resilient communities across the Nation.

Wildland Firefighter Workforce Reforms

BIL funding also enables DOI to accelerate its *Plan to Transform the Firefighting Workforce*, initiated in 2021. Recent challenging wildfire seasons have focused attention on the increasing threat of wildfires to people, communities, and the natural environment. Yesterday's fire *season* is today's fire *year*. Shifting the current workforce toward more career appointments supports career growth and increases the retention of more experienced and knowledgeable firefighters. In turn, this will have a substantial long-lasting effect in support of more sound and robust management, decision-making, and safety for firefighters and the public.



Photo 5. The BLM's Folsom Lake Veterans Crew trains Army personnel in wildland fire response on the 2021 Dixie Fire. Photo by Joe Bradshaw, BLM.

Continuing efforts started in 2021 to convert seasonal wildland firefighters to permanent full-time status will facilitate DOI efforts to respond to wildfires year-round and undertake hazardous fuel projects during periods of low wildfire activity. The BIL provides funding for additional employee conversions and to make Federal wildland firefighting compensation more competitive compared to some state and local entities. DOI is also working with the USDA Forest Service, OMB, and Office of Personnel Management to

develop a wildland firefighter occupational series, as directed by the BIL, and exploring long-term solutions to wildland firefighter pay. Collectively, these efforts will address on-going recruitment challenges and will help DOI and the USDA Forest Service have an adequate workforce to meet the ever-increasing demand of fire response and fire risk mitigation.

Additionally, the BIL provides funding to expand opportunities for training for staff, non-Federal wildland firefighters, and Native village fire crews to increase the pace and scale of fuel management treatments. This includes training on how to prepare and implement large-landscape treatments. It can be accomplished through existing, joint DOI and USDA programs and initiatives that are supported by the Prescribed Fire Training Center, Prescribed Fire Training Exchanges, Indigenous Peoples Burning Network, Fuels Treatment Academies, and others.

IV. Conclusion

Funding provided by the BIL is critical to ensure that states, Tribal Nations, Federal partners, and stakeholders have the funding and resources they need to guard against the impacts of climate change; improve the resiliency of landscapes; and safeguard people, communities, and resources from wildfire risk. This plan provides a roadmap for achieving these broad objectives and hinges on collaborative efforts and partnerships with stakeholders to leverage information, data, and resources. Key to our success is aligning DOI's Five-Year Plan with the USDA Forest Service's 10-Year Strategy. Utilizing sound science, implementing a shared-value mitigation tool, and leveraging existing authorities and processes supports DOI's collaborative efforts to achieve the transformational goals of this important law.