



## Memorandum

To: Chief, U.S.D.A. Forest Service  
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs  
Director, Bureau of Land Management  
Director, National Park Service  
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

From: Sonny Perdue  
Secretary of Agriculture  
  
Ryan K. Zinke  
Secretary of the Interior

Subject: 2018 Direction to Wildland Fire Leadership

As predicted, 2017 was one of the most challenging fire years on record. The rate and intensity of wildfires stretched our firefighting capabilities, greatly affecting many communities, impacting lives, and damaging natural resources. However, the greatest losses were those of the 14 wildland firefighters who sacrificed to protect the lives of others and the lands and resources we are entrusted to manage. Our Nation saw more than 71,000 wildfires burn more than 10 million acres of Federal, State, Tribal, and private lands. The Federal Government spent \$2.9 billion - the largest amount ever - on suppression operations. A combined 75 days were spent at Preparedness Levels 4 and 5, the second highest number of days at those levels since 1990.

As we begin the 2018 fire year, we want to remind everyone that the protection of firefighters and public safety is the single, overriding priority in every fire management activity and decision that we make. Federal wildfire policy is set forth in the "Guidance for Implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy, 2009." One of the fundamental principles underlying this guidance is the emphasis on firefighter and public safety in every aspect of wildland fire management. It is essential that all firefighting personnel understand the guiding principles and policies contained in this document and recognize the importance of maintaining a safe work environment in all operational aspects of the program.

A commitment to firefighter safety requires a workplace where all members of the firefighting community can focus on the mission and have strong trust relationships with their colleagues and partners. To that end, harassment of any kind by any member of the firefighting community will simply not be tolerated. Both the Department of the Interior and U.S. Department of Agriculture (Departments) are pressing forward with fundamental changes that are intended to improve each

organization's culture. We will compel greater accountability on the part of the entire workforce that promotes a healthy culture throughout both organizations.

Both Departments will continue to collaborate with all Federal, Tribal, State, and local partners to share firefighting resources and assets in a coordinated response to manage wildfires. In carrying out these responsibilities, the protection of Tribal trust assets is vital to ensuring that trust lands are managed sustainably for generations to come. It is essential that firefighters have the right tools, resources, and flexibility that allow them to do their jobs safely and effectively. As we continue to explore opportunities to improve efficiencies, we will look to integrate technology, such as the use of unmanned aircraft systems, into our operations and capitalize on other advancements to promote firefighter safety, support planning, and protect communities.

Thank you for your continued leadership and service to our Nation. Carrying out our stewardship responsibilities in a safe, coordinated, and responsible manner is key to the success of the Wildland Fire Management program.

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