



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

and Performance Information
Fiscal Year 2026

U.S. WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE

NOTICE: These budget
justifications are prepared
for the Interior, Environment
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Appropriations
Subcommittees.



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Table of Contents

Executive Summary	3
Introduction.....	3
Mission Statement.....	4
Budget Overview	5
Table 1: Summary Table	6
Legislative Proposals	6
Account and Activity/Subactivity Details.....	7
Table 2: Summary of Requirements.....	7
Activity: Preparedness	9
Program Changes	9
Program Overview	9
Program Activities	10
Table 3: Federal Preparedness and Suppression Resources	11
Table 4: Tribal Preparedness and Suppression Resources	12
Activity: Suppression Operations	13
Program Changes	13
Program Overview	13
Program Activities	14
Activity: Fuels Management.....	15
Program Changes	15
Program Overview	15
Program Activities	16
Activity: Other Operations.....	17
Program Changes	17
Program Overview	18
Program Activities	20
Activity: Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund	21
Program Changes	21
Program Overview	21
Other Exhibits	23
Appropriations Language.....	23
Wildland Fire Service Operations Account.....	23
Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund Account.....	29

General Provisions 31

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act FY 2026 Spend Plan..... 33

 Introduction..... 33

 Table 5: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Planned Appropriations Apportionment for FY 2026
 33

 Preparedness 34

 Fuels Management 35

 Burned Area Rehabilitation..... 36

 Joint Fire Science Program 36

Compliance with Section 403 37

 Table 6: External Administrative Costs: Working Capital Fund 37

 Table 7: External Administrative Costs: Bureau Administrative Costs 38

Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act Report..... 39

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Executive Summary

Introduction

The United States is currently facing an alarming wildfire crisis, marked by an increasing frequency, intensity, and scale of fires that threaten communities, businesses, infrastructure, and recreational areas vital to the Country's security and economic prosperity. Protecting American lives, homes, and livelihoods from wildfire is a top priority for the Administration. In 2024 more than 8.9 million acres across all U.S. lands were consumed by nearly 65,000 wildfires, exceeding the ten-year average by 27 percent.¹ A majority of those acres were near communities and infrastructure, impacting many lives and imposing a high economic cost. In addition to wildfire suppression, protecting American lives and property through the fuels management program is essential to the Country's economic prosperity.

Already as of June 2025, devastating wildfires have burned more than 1.1 million acres.² In Southern California, fast-moving wildfires burned through densely developed neighborhoods in January, resulting in a tragic toll of 29 lives lost, more than 16,000 homes burned, and losses estimated between \$76 billion and \$131 billion.^{3,4} The National Interagency Fire Center (NIFC) predicts elevated wildfire risks across the United States for the rest of 2025 due to drought conditions, below-normal precipitation, and above-normal forecasted temperatures.⁵ These long-term trends are predicted to continue, with increasing wildfire occurrence, burned area, and high severity incidents expected in 2026 and beyond.

President Trump is taking bold steps to respond to these urgent challenges. On June 12, 2025, President Trump signed Executive Order 14308 to empower common sense wildfire prevention and response. The Executive Order supports local wildfire preparedness and response by improving Federal partnerships, as well as driving responsible land management and prevention at the State and local levels. In addition, the Executive Order directs Federal agencies to leverage data and technology, modify rules to facilitate preventative prescribed fires and the appropriate use of fire retardants, promote innovative use of woody biomass and other forest products to reduce fuel loads that strengthen fires, and minimize wildfire ignition risks from the bulk-power system. This Executive Order builds on Executive Order 14225, signed March 1, 2025, which will enhance forest management and promote responsible use of American timber to reduce wildfire risks.

The President's Fiscal Year (FY) 2026 Budget proposes a strategic consolidation of the Department of Agriculture (USDA) Forest Service (FS) and Department of the Interior (DOI or Interior) Wildland Fire Management (WFM) programs—establishing a new U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) in Interior. This consolidation will reform and unify Federal wildland fire resources and operations while implementing consistent standards to drive performance among senior leaders. Under the new USWFS, command and appropriations from all existing WFM activities in Interior bureaus and the USDA FS will be consolidated to streamline Federal suppression response, risk mitigation, and coordination with non-Federal partners to combat the wildfire crisis, supporting faster coordination due to fewer jurisdictional

¹ https://www.nifc.gov/sites/default/files/NICC/2-Predictive%20Services/Intelligence/Annual%20Reports/2024/annual_report_2024.pdf

² <https://www.nifc.gov/fire-information/nfn>

³ <https://data.ca.gov/dataset/dins-2025-eaton-public-view>

⁴ <https://emergency.lacity.gov/dashboard>

⁵ https://www.nifc.gov/nicc-files/predictive/outlooks/monthly_seasonal_outlook.pdf

barriers. The new USWFS will employ all Federal wildland firefighters responsible for lands administered by Interior and USDA FS, wildfire risk mitigation planners, and other WFM personnel. The USWFS will manage all Federal wildfire response policies, with an elevated focus on innovation and deployment of new technology across Federal lands regardless of their statutory constructs. The USWFS also will procure and maintain Federal wildland fire resources, leveraging a consolidated procurement process that enables an optimal mix of assets based on national needs and opportunities to negotiate better deals and purchase at scale. As part of this new unified approach, Interior is eliminating duplicative policies and streamlining program implementation.

The USWFS will oversee wildland fire management and risk reduction across nearly 700 million acres of public lands, including the more than 500 million acres managed by Interior⁶ across its Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), Bureau of Land Management (BLM), National Park Service (NPS), and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), and 193 million acres of national forests and grasslands managed by the USDA FS.⁷ The unified USWFS will serve as a more cohesive and efficient organization for managing and preventing wildfires, streamlining operations, and optimizing resource allocation, including risk evaluation across the Federal estate to inform ideal resource allocation for hazardous fuels reduction. These reforms will enable a comprehensive approach to proactively mitigate wildfire risk throughout the country.

Mission Statement

The goal of the new USWFS is to achieve an integrated, cost-efficient, and operationally more effective Federal wildland fire management organization that meets unified and coordinated response needs and resource and safety objectives. The guiding program principles and priorities are to reduce wildfire risk, create fire-resilient landscapes, promote fire-adapted communities, and safely and effectively respond to wildfires through strong Federal, Tribal, State, and local collaboration.

⁶ The Interior-managed lands include 57 million acres in trust for Tribal Nations.

⁷ <https://www.fs.usda.gov/about-agency/newsroom/by-the-numbers>



Wildland firefighters in California manage a prescribed fire that will help reduce the future risk of catastrophic wildfires. Photo by USDA FS.

Budget Overview

The President's 2026 Budget for the USWFS is \$6.55 billion. The 2026 Budget provides \$3.7 billion for the new Wildland Fire Service Operations account and \$2.85 billion for the combined Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund. Continued investment in the Federal wildland fire workforce is essential to protecting the public and reducing the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. The Budget continues permanent pay increases for Federal and Tribal wildland firefighters across the United States. Further, the Budget fully funds the new special salary rates for Federal wildland firefighters at all levels, including temporary and seasonal employees, and the new incident response premium pay for all responders, as enacted in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (P.L. 119-4). The Budget also includes funding for Tribal Nations to provide similar pay increases to their wildland firefighters. These permanent pay increases are a key element of fighting destructive fires and will help the USWFS and Tribes recruit and retain the top talent needed to achieve Federal wildland fire goals.

Further, the 2026 Budget supports the Administration's priority to streamline government and will continue efforts to unify and optimize administrative services across Interior to increase effectiveness and efficiency for the benefit of American taxpayers.

Table 1: Summary Table

**U.S. Wildland Fire Service
2026 President’s Budget Submission (\$000)**

Budget Authority	2024 Actual¹	2025 Notional¹	2026 Request²
Current, Wildland Fire Service Operations	1,113,471	1,147,171	3,702,107
<i>Net Other Transfers</i>	<i>5,288</i>	<i>20,511</i>	<i>0</i>
Total Current, (with Transfers) without Supplemental Funding	1,118,759	1,167,682	3,702,107
<i>Supplemental Funding: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58)</i>	<i>262,600</i>	<i>262,600</i>	<i>262,600</i>
<i>Supplemental Funding: Transfer to Office of Inspector General (P.L. 117-58)</i>	<i>-1,313</i>	<i>-1,313</i>	<i>-1,313</i>
<i>Supplemental Funding: Transfer from USDA Forest Service (P.L. 117-58)³</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>530,488</i>
Total Current, with Transfers and Supplemental Funding	1,380,046	1,428,969	4,493,882
Current, Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund	350,000	360,000	2,850,000
TOTAL Current, U.S. Wildland Fire Service without Transfers or Supplemental Funding	1,463,471	1,507,171	6,552,107

¹ The 2024 Actual and 2025 Notional amounts are for Interior’s current Wildland Fire Management and Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund accounts only (i.e., they do not include USDA FS resources). FY 2025 resource levels are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4) to revise 2025 spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

² The 2026 Request column shows amounts for the new USWFS to be established in Interior through consolidation of Interior’s current wildland fire management program with the current wildland fire management activities and resources of USDA FS. The Administration will transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources supporting wildland fire management from USDA FS to Interior in the future.

³ The 2026 Request column shows amounts of Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding from 2026 and prior years to be transferred from USDA FS to Interior for the new USWFS. The Administration’s 2026 Budget Technical Supplement (formerly, “Budget Appendix”) includes a different amount due to a data entry error. The amount in this table is correct.

Legislative Proposals

The 2026 Budget proposes legislation, including appropriations language, to establish the USWFS. For more information, see the Appropriations Language subsection in the “Other Exhibits” section of this justification. The Administration will separately transmit proposed authorizing legislation to support this important reform.

ACCOUNT DETAILS

Account and Activity/Subactivity Details

Table 2: Summary of Requirements

**U.S. Wildland Fire Service
2026 President's Budget Submission (\$000)**

ACCOUNT/Activity/Subactivity	2024 Actual ¹	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request ²
WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS			
Preparedness	492,364	512,364	1,496,100
Total, Preparedness	492,364	512,364	1,496,100
Suppression Operations	383,657	383,657	1,394,657
Total, Suppression Operations	383,657	383,657	1,394,657
Fuels Management	214,450	228,150	770,050
Total, Fuels Management	214,450	228,150	770,050
Other Operations: Burned Area Rehabilitation	10,000	10,000	5,000
Other Operations: Facilities Construction and Maintenance	10,000	10,000	5,000
Other Operations: Joint Fire Science Program	3,000	3,000	0
Other Operations: Intelligence and Technology	0	0	28,500
Other Operations: Grants and Partnerships	0	0	2,800
Total, Other Operations	23,000	23,000	41,300
TOTAL WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS (excluding Transfers and Supplemental Funding)	1,113,471	1,147,171	3,702,107
<i>Net Other Transfers</i>	<i>5,288</i>	<i>20,511</i>	<i>0</i>
TOTAL, WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS (including Transfers)	1,118,759	1,167,682	3,702,107
<i>Supplemental Funding: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (P.L. 117-58)</i>	<i>262,600</i>	<i>262,600</i>	<i>262,600</i>
<i>Supplemental Funding: Transfer to Office of Inspector General (P.L. 117-58)</i>	<i>-1,313</i>	<i>-1,313</i>	<i>-1,313</i>
<i>Supplemental Funding: Transfer from USDA Forest Service (P.L. 117-58)³</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>530,488</i>
TOTAL, WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE OPERATIONS (including Transfers and Supplemental Funding)	1,380,046	1,428,969	4,493,882
WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS RESERVE FUND			
Suppression Operations	350,000	360,000	2,850,000

ACCOUNT/Activity/Subactivity	2024 Actual ¹	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request ²
TOTAL, WILDFIRE SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS RESERVE FUND	350,000	360,000	2,850,000
TOTAL, U.S. WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE (excluding Transfers and Supplemental Funding)	1,463,471	1,507,171	6,552,107
TOTAL, U.S. WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE (including Transfers and Supplemental Funding)	1,730,046	1,788,969	7,343,882

¹ The 2024 Actual and 2025 Notional amounts show funding for Interior's current Wildland Fire Management and Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund accounts only (i.e., they do not include USDA FS resources). FY 2025 resource levels are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4) to revise 2025 spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

² The 2026 Request column shows amounts for the new USWFS to be established in Interior through consolidation of Interior’s current wildland fire management program with the current wildland fire management activities and resources of USDA FS. The Administration will transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources supporting wildland fire management from USDA FS to Interior in the future.

³ The 2026 Request column shows amounts of Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act funding from 2026 and prior years to be transferred from USDA Forest Service to Interior for the new USWFS. The Administration’s 2026 Budget Technical Supplement (formerly, “Budget Appendix”) includes a different amount due to a data entry error. The amount in this table is correct.



A wildland firefighter carrying a drip torch lights a prescribed fire in Oregon as part of a partnership effort to reduce the risk of wildfires to nearby communities. Photo by the Lomakatsi Restoration Project.

PREPAREDNESS

Activity: Preparedness

Activity: Preparedness *Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

Activity/ Subactivity	2024 Actual ¹	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request ²
Preparedness	492,364	512,364	1,496,100
Activity Total	492,364	512,364	1,496,100

¹ The 2024 Actual and 2025 Notional amounts show funding for the Department of the Interior's current Wildland Fire Management account only. FY 2025 resource levels are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise 2025 spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

² The 2026 Request column shows amounts for the new USWFS to be established in Interior through consolidation of Interior's current wildland fire management program with the current wildland fire management activities and resources of USDA FS.

Program Changes

The 2026 Budget supports USWFS firefighting capabilities and maintains readiness to achieve a high initial attack success rate for wildland fire response. The Preparedness program activity provides for an integrated and coordinated framework for wildfire response by funding core Federal and Tribal firefighting resources and assets to protect public health, critical infrastructure, natural and cultural resources, and communities from the detrimental effects of wildfires. Major resources supported by this program activity include firefighters, support personnel, training, engines, and other heavy equipment.

The 2026 Budget request provides \$1,496,100,000 for Preparedness. The request reflects the consolidation of USDA FS's preparedness personnel and other resources into the new USWFS in Interior.

Program Overview

The Preparedness activity provides for the firefighting resources and assets to protect public health, natural and cultural resources, critical infrastructure, and communities from the detrimental effects of wildfires. Interior and its partners manage a wildfire response framework for efficient wildfire risk mitigation and 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 some aviation resources, engines, and equipment, along with services that provide the capacity to fight wildfires safely and effectively. Interior shares these resources 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 need. Maximizing the mobility of resources increases efficiency by lowering costs and reducing the potential for duplicating the deployment of valuable firefighting assets.



Wildland firefighters in Montana hike back to their vehicles through a partially burned forest. Photo by BLM.

Interior, through the new USWFS, will increase efficiencies and partnerships to maintain core capabilities. 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

Through funding for the Preparedness and Fuels Management⁸ activities, the 2026 Budget fully supports the costs of permanent pay increases for Federal and Tribal wildland firefighters across the United States, as provided for in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law 119–4). As wildfires grow larger and more destructive—threatening communities, livelihoods, and infrastructure—wildland fire personnel face growing demands. This improved firefighter pay is helping to address this challenge by enabling the Federal government and Tribes to compete with private employers and to hire and retain top employees in this critical field.

Table 3 summarizes the combined Preparedness and Suppression⁹ equipment and aviation resources of Interior and USDA FS, which will be part of the new USWFS. The estimates for 2026 are based on 2024 actual and 2025 planned levels.

⁸ See the Fuels Management Activity section for program details.

⁹ See the Suppression Activity section for program details.

Table 3: Federal Preparedness and Suppression Resources

Federal Wildland Fire Preparedness and Suppression Resources

Resource	2024 Actual and 2025 Planned USDA FS	2024 Actual and 2025 Planned Interior	2026 Request Interior USWFS ¹
Federal Engines and Heavy Equipment:			
Engines	900	660	1,560
Heavy Equipment	210	95	305
TOTAL Federal Engines and Heavy Equipment	1,110	755	1,865
Federal Aviation Resources:			
Helicopters:			
<i>Type 1 Helicopters</i>	28	1	29
<i>Type 2 Helicopters</i>	34	9	43
<i>Type 3 Helicopters</i>	46	31	77
Subtotal, Helicopters	108	41	149
Air Tankers:			
<i>Large and Very Large Air Tankers</i>	29	0	29
<i>Single Engine Air Tankers</i>	0	35	35
Subtotal, Airtankers	29	35	64
Water Scoopers	10	6	16
Smokejumper Planes	20	7	27
Aerial Supervision Module (ASM)/Lead Planes	17	5	22
Air Tactical Units	78	13	91
Utility Aircraft	0	5	5
InfraRed Mapping	8	0	8
Large Passenger Transport	2	0	2
TOTAL Federal Aviation Resources²	272	112	384

¹ The 2026 Request column shows the estimated number of Preparedness and Suppression resources for the new USWFS, which is the sum of the 2024 and 2025 resources of USDA FS and Interior wildland fire management.

² Aviation resources are funded through a combination of appropriations for Preparedness and Suppression Operations.

Table 4 provides a summary of the Preparedness and Suppression equipment resources of Tribal Nations. The estimates for 2024-2026 are based on 2023 actual levels, which is the most recent available data.

Table 4: Tribal Preparedness and Suppression Resources

**Tribal Wildland Fire Preparedness and Suppression Resources
2023 Actual (and estimated for 2024-2026)**

Resource	Number
Engines	50
Other Heavy Equipment	18



The Ute Mountain helitack crew prepares to support wildfire response efforts. Photo by BIA.

SUPPRESSION OPERATIONS

Activity: Suppression Operations

Activity: Suppression Operations

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity/ Subactivity	2024 Actual ¹	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request ²
Suppression	383,657	383,657	1,394,657
Activity Total	383,657	383,657	1,394,657

¹ The 2024 Actual and 2025 Notional amounts show funding for the Department of the Interior's current Wildland Fire Management account only. FY 2025 resource levels are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise 2025 spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

² The 2026 Request column shows amounts for the new USWFS to be established in Interior through consolidation of Interior's current wildland fire management program with the current wildland fire management activities and resources of USDA FS.

Program Changes

The Budget request supports Suppression Operations to provide incident management personnel, aviation and operational assets, logistical services, and supplies and equipment, as well as to employ temporary emergency firefighters. In addition to suppressing wildfires that threaten lives and communities, personnel implement emergency stabilization projects following wildfires to minimize threats to life or property, protect water quality, and reduce the risks of floods, landslides, and erosion on or near burned landscapes.

The 2026 Budget request provides \$1,394,657,000 for Suppression Operations. The request reflects the consolidation of USDA FS's wildfire suppression resources into the new USWFS in Interior.

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 funds an extensive range of resources, including:

- Incident management personnel and support functions;
- Aviation and operational assets;
- Logistical services, supplies, and equipment;
- Temporary emergency firefighters; and
- Personnel costs beyond those that are covered by the Preparedness activity (e.g., incident response premium pay for all personnel mobilized on an incident).

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

- Suppressing wildfires that threaten lives, communities, and values at risk;

- Managing wildfires to accomplish resource benefit, when it is 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 wildfire 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 wildfire activity and danger.

In addition to this funding, the 2026 Budget request makes available another \$2,850,000,000 through the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund. Interior may access this reserve funding if the costs of wildfire suppression operations exceed the resources available for Suppression Operations in the Wildland Fire Service Operations account. In combination, Suppression Operations funding and Reserve Fund resources help to ensure that sufficient funds are available for suppression needs at all times. For more information, see the “Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund” section of this justification.

Program Activities

The 2026 Budget request for Suppression Operations supports wildfire suppression and response throughout the United States. It provides funding for Federal and Tribal personnel, including seasonal and temporary workers who provide increased response capacity. It also funds a significant portion of the USWFS’s aviation resources, including contracted aircraft. For more information on Suppression Operations equipment resources, see Tables 3 and 4 in the “Preparedness” section of this justification.



A water scooper drops water on the Wolf Creek Fire in Idaho. Photo by BLM.

The request for Suppression Operations also fully supports the costs of permanent pay reforms enacted in Public Law 119-4. In particular, most of the costs of the new incident response premium pay for all personnel mobilized on an incident will be paid with Suppression funding.¹⁰ The 2026 Budget fully funds these costs.

¹⁰ Interior and the new USWFS will pay the costs of incident response premium pay for prescribed fires with Fuels Management funding.

FUELS MANAGEMENT

Activity: Fuels Management

Activity: Fuels Management

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity/ Subactivity	2024 Actual ¹	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request ²
Fuels Management	214,450	228,150	770,050
Activity Total	214,450	228,150	770,050

¹ The 2024 Actual and 2025 Notional amounts show funding for the Department of the Interior’s current Wildland Fire Management account only. FY 2025 resource levels are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4) to revise 2025 spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

² The 2026 Request column shows amounts for the new USWFS to be established in Interior through consolidation of Interior’s current wildland fire management program with the current wildland fire management activities and resources of USDA FS.

Program Changes

The Budget request supports Fuels Management to mitigate the risks of catastrophic wildfires and create fire-resilient landscapes through fuels management projects on lands administered by Interior and USDA FS and on some non-Federal lands. Interior and its partners manage vegetation to reduce the intensity, severity, and negative effects of wildfire.

The 2026 Budget request provides \$770,050,000 for Fuels Management. The request reflects the consolidation of USDA FS’s hazardous fuels management resources into the new USWFS in Interior.

Program Overview

The strategic management of burnable vegetation—known in the wildland fire management community as “fuels”—is an effective approach to reduce the likelihood of negative impacts from wildfires to highly valued resources and assets. Interior, through the new USWFS, will carry out fuels management in collaboration with multiple partners, including other Federal agencies, Tribal Nations, States, counties, local organizations, and private landowners. Fuels specialists plan, implement, and monitor fuels management projects to mitigate the likelihood and impacts of wildfires and achieve priority land management objectives. This work occurs year-round, encompassing a



Heavy equipment collects fallen trees in an evergreen forest as part of the Alaska Peak Timber Sale, which is thinning the Tahoe National Forest to reduce the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. Photo by USDA FS.

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 support community-led actions to understand, plan, and implement effective wildfire mitigation efforts in communities across the country.

Program Activities

Through funding for the Fuels Management and Preparedness¹¹ activities, the 2026 Budget fully supports the costs of permanent pay increases for Federal and Tribal wildland firefighters across the United States, as provided for in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law 119–4). As wildfires grow larger and more destructive—threatening communities, livelihoods, and infrastructure—wildland fire personnel face growing demands. This improved firefighter pay is helping to address this challenge by enabling the Federal government and Tribes to compete with private employers and to hire and retain top employees in this critical field. In addition, Interior and the new USWFS will pay the costs of the new incident response premium pay for all personnel mobilized on prescribed fires with Fuels Management funding.¹²

The 2026 Budget will support fuels management activities on an estimated 3.5 million acres. It also will fund risk assessments, monitoring, contract preparation, and administrative actions necessary to mitigate



A wildland firefighter uses a drip torch to light a prescribed fire in Florida to reduce the risk of future catastrophic wildfires. Photo by NPS.

the risks and impacts of wildfires. This work will improve the resiliency of communities, infrastructure, and ecosystems to wildfires by increasing their abilities to withstand a wildfire and recover quickly.

The 2026 Budget request also proposes appropriations language that will increase USWFS’s flexibility to engage in cross-boundary fuels management and burned area rehabilitation, including with non-federal partners. For more information on this proposal, see the Appropriations Language subsection in the “Other Exhibits” section of this justification.

¹¹ See the Preparedness Activity section for program details.

¹² Interior will pay the costs of incident response premium pay for wildfire suppression with Suppression Operations funding.

OTHER OPERATIONS

Activity: Other Operations

Activity: Other Operations *Dollars in Thousands (\$000)*

Subactivity	2024 Actual ¹	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request ^{2,3}
Burned Area Rehabilitation	10,000	10,000	5,000
Facilities Construction and Maintenance	10,000	10,000	5,000
Joint Fire Science Program	3,000	3,000	0
Intelligence and Technology	0	0	28,500
Grants and Partnerships	0	0	2,800
Activity Total	23,000	23,000	41,300

¹ The 2024 Actual and 2025 Notional amounts show funding for the Department of the Interior's current Wildland Fire Management account only. FY 2025 resource levels are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise 2025 spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

² The 2026 Request column shows amounts for the new USWFS to be established in Interior through consolidation of Interior's current wildland fire management program with the current wildland fire management activities and resources of USDA FS.

³ The Administration will transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources supporting other wildland fire management operations from USDA FS to Interior in the future.

Program Changes

The Budget request for Other Operations comprises five subactivities:

1. **Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR)** – This subactivity is part of the Wildland Fire Management account in 2024 and 2025. It is retained in the 2026 Budget request for the new Wildland Fire Service Operations account.
2. **Facilities Construction and Maintenance** – This subactivity is part of the Wildland Fire Management account in 2024 and 2025. It is retained in the 2026 Budget request for the new Wildland Fire Service Operations account.
3. **Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP)** – This subactivity is part of the Wildland Fire Management account in 2024 and 2025. It is realigned to the new Intelligence and Technology subactivity in the 2026 Budget request for the new Wildland Fire Service Operations account.
4. **Intelligence and Technology** – This subactivity is new in the 2026 Budget request for the new Wildland Fire Service Operations account. It includes funding for the Joint Fire Science Program, in addition to other research and science activities, and information technology.

5. **Grants and Partnerships** – This subactivity is new in the 2026 Budget for the new Wildland Fire Service Operations account. It includes funding for the Rural Fire Assistance program.

The 2026 Budget request provides \$41,300,000 for Other Operations. The request reflects the consolidation of USDA FS's Joint Fire Science Program resources into the new USWFS in Interior. The Administration will transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources supporting other wildland fire management operations from USDA FS to Interior in the future.

Program Overview

Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR): The BAR subactivity supports longer-term efforts to repair or improve burned landscapes that are unlikely to recover without human assistance. Immediate threats after a wildfire—such as floods, debris flows, and landslides—are treated using emergency stabilization funds from the Suppression Operations activity. BAR picks up where emergency stabilization projects leave off. Working with partners from Tribal Nations, States, counties, and local governments, Interior—through the new USWFS—will carry out non-emergency rehabilitation actions that may take up to five years to complete.

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.



Resource advisors wrap a shelter in North Cascades National Park to protect it from an approaching wildfire.
Photo by NPS.

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

Facilities Construction and Maintenance (Facilities): The Facilities subactivity provides funding for safe and modern facilities that are essential to achieving the wildland fire management mission to protect lives, property, and resources from wildfire. Key areas of emphasis include the following:

- Providing housing for firefighters and other wildland fire personnel;
- Replacing building systems and components that have exceeded their useful lives;

- Installing facilities that improve the wildfire response capability required to keep wildfires small and reduce 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.

Joint Fire Science Program (JFSP): JFSP, which Interior and the USDA FS currently fund and administer together, provides funding for wildland fire research to inform policies and decisions at local, regional, and national levels. JFSP competitively funds wildland fire research projects and delivery to answer emerging questions and fill knowledge gaps about managing wildland fire, fuels, and ecosystems impacted by wildfire. The 2026 Budget request realigns JFSP under the new Intelligence and Technology subactivity. For more information on that subactivity, see below.

Intelligence and Technology: The new Intelligence and Technology subactivity supports wildland fire information technology (IT), research, and science, including JFSP. The 2026 Budget request consolidates Interior’s wildland fire IT, previously funded through Preparedness and Fuels Management, in this new subactivity. Additionally, the request consolidates funding from Interior and USDA FS for JFSP. The Administration will transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources supporting Intelligence and Technology from USDA FS to Interior in the future.



A helicopter manager completes his daily documentation after a long shift supporting initial attack of the Buck Creek Fire near Silver Lake, Oregon. Photo by BLM.

Grants and Partnerships: The Grants and Partnerships subactivity supports targeted rural fire assistance, which supports enhanced fire protection capabilities of key rural and volunteer fire departments through training, equipment purchases, and fire prevention work on a cost-shared basis. The 2026 Budget funding level reflects the fact that States and localities have a central role in funding wildfire preparedness and are best positioned to execute this core function without unnecessary Federal constraints. The Administration

will transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources supporting Grants and Partnerships from USDA to Interior in the future.

Program Activities

BAR: The 2026 Budget request provides \$5.0 million for BAR projects, which are undertaken to restore and enhance ecosystem health and enable landscapes to be more resilient to wildfires. Without timely rehabilitation actions to restore burned acres to their desired condition, post-wildfire damages become more complex and costly to treat. The request will fund BAR projects on an estimated 80,000 burned acres.

The 2026 Budget request also proposes appropriations language that will increase USWFS's flexibility to engage in cross-boundary burned area rehabilitation and fuels management, including with non-federal partners. For more information on this proposal, see the Appropriations Language subsection in the "Other Exhibits" section of this justification.

Facilities: The request provides \$5.0 million for constructing and maintaining facilities that support the wildland fire management mission. In addition to this new funding, USWFS will use unobligated balances of prior-year appropriations for this purpose. Further, USWFS may use other funding appropriated to the Department for construction and maintenance to support wildland fire management.

JFSP: The 2026 Budget request realigns JFSP under the new Intelligence and Technology subactivity. Therefore, the budget requests no funding for the JFSP subactivity. For more information, see the section on the Intelligence and Technology subactivity.

Intelligence and Technology: The request provides \$28.5 million for this new subactivity. This funding will support wildland fire IT, research, and science, including continuation of JFSP. The Administration will transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources supporting Intelligence and Technology from USDA FS to Interior in the future.



A wildland firefighter pilots an uncrewed aerial system on a prescribed fire in Florida. Photo by NPS.

Grants and Partnerships: The 2026 Budget request provides \$2.8 million for this new subactivity. This funding will support rural fire assistance. The Administration will transfer additional operational capacity and budgetary resources supporting Grants and Partnerships from USDA FS to Interior in the future.

SUPPRESSION RESERVE FUND

Activity: Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund

Activity: Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund

Dollars in Thousands (\$000)

Activity/ Subactivity	2024 Actual ¹	2025 Notional ¹	2026 Request ²
Reserve Fund	350,000	360,000	2,850,000
Activity Total	350,000	360,000	2,850,000

¹ The 2024 Actual and 2025 Notional amounts show funding for the Department of the Interior's current Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund account only. FY 2025 resource levels are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise 2025 spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

² The 2026 Request column shows amounts for the new USWFS to be established in Interior through consolidation of Interior's current wildland fire management program with the current wildland fire management activities and resources of USDA FS.

Program Changes

The 2026 Budget request provides \$2,850,000,000 for the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund (Reserve Fund). The request reflects the consolidation of USDA FS's wildfire suppression reserve fund resources into the new USWFS in Interior.

Program Overview

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 discretionary spending "cap adjustment" and provided additional new budget authority for wildfire suppression operations through 2027. This change was in recognition of the fact that funding for Suppression Operations in the operating accounts 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 \$2.85 billion in additional funding for wildfire suppression for FY 2026. The 2026 Budget request also proposes appropriations language to allow the transfer of funds for any wildland fire purpose, including the establishment and implementation of the USWFS, within and between Interior and USDA FS.

Before Interior and the new USWFS may access this reserve 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 operating account.¹³ Unobligated balances in the Reserve Fund carry forward from one year to the next.

¹³ For 2024 and 2025, the operating account is the Wildland Fire Management account. For 2026, it is the new Wildland Fire Service Operations account.



A helicopter supports wildfire suppression operations in Everglades National Park. Photo by NPS.

The Sec. 104 reporting requirement in Division O, Title I of P.L. 115-141, as amended, requires Interior to prepare an annual report to Congress on wildfire suppression spending in fiscal years when it obligates Reserve Fund resources that have been transferred to the operating account. The report is due no later than 90 days after the end of such fiscal year.

OTHER EXHIBITS

Other Exhibits

Appropriations Language

Wildland Fire Service Operations Account

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR U.S. WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE

Wildland Fire Service Operations (Legislative proposal, not subject to PAYGO) (Including Transfers of Funds)

Contingent upon the enactment of legislation establishing within the Department of the Interior an agency known as the United States Wildland Fire Service responsible for carrying out all aspects of the Federal wildland fire missions currently assigned to the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, for necessary expenses of the United States Wildland Fire Service, \$3,702,107,000, to remain available until expended, of which, \$1,394,657,000 shall be available for wildfire suppression operations, and is provided to meet the terms of section 251(b)(2)(F)(ii)(I) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985: Provided, 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 43 U.S.C. 1856 et seq., for protection of United States property, may be credited to the appropriation from which the funds were expended to provide that protection, and are available without fiscal year limitation: Provided further, That the Secretary may enter into procurement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, for fuels management and burned area rehabilitation activities, and for training and monitoring associated with such activities: Provided further, That activities specified in the preceding proviso may occur on Federal land, or on non-Federal land when such activities benefit resources on Federal land or Federally-recognized Tribal 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 microbusinesses; 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 may use the funds appropriated in this Act 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 any wildland fire purpose between the Departments and may transfer funds made available to their respective Departments and agencies for activities related to Federal wildland fire missions among and between the Departments and agencies affected by the establishment and implementation of the United States Wildland Fire Service: 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 Departments of State or Defense in connection with forest and rangeland research, technical information, and assistance in foreign countries, and, with the concurrence of the appropriate Secretary, 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 any moneys received by the United States as a result of the compromise or settlement of any claim whether sounding in tort, contract, or any other cause of action involving present or potential damage to lands managed by the Departments of the Interior or Agriculture resulting from wildland fires shall be credited to this account and shall be available until expended.

Note.—This is new USWFS appropriations language for FY 2026. The Department of the Interior Office of Wildland Fire’s Wildland Fire Management account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Division A of Public Law 119–4).

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE**

Appropriation: Wildland Fire Service Operations (Including Transfers of Funds)

1. ***Contingent upon the enactment of legislation establishing within the Department of the Interior an agency known as the United States Wildland Fire Service responsible for carrying out all aspects of the Federal wildland fire missions currently assigned to the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, for necessary expenses of the United States Wildland Fire Service, \$3,702,107,000, to remain available until expended, of which, \$1,394,657,000 shall be available for wildfire suppression operations, and is provided to meet the terms of section 251(b)(2)(F)(ii)(I) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985:***

This language provides funding for the new U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) contingent upon the enactment of legislation establishing USWFS within the Department of the Interior (Interior). The language states that USWFS will be responsible for carrying out all aspects of the wildland fire missions currently assigned to Interior and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The total appropriation is \$3,702,107,000, of which \$1,394,657,000 is for wildfire suppression operations. The language further provides that this funding is available until it is expended.

2. ***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 USWFS to feed and house firefighters hired pursuant to 43 U.S.C. 1469 with this appropriation.

3. ***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 to retain funds it receives as reimbursement for wildfire protection services provided to other entities, rather than having to submit them to the U.S. Treasury, and makes these collected amounts available for Interior's use until expended.

4. ***Provided further, That the Secretary may enter into procurement contracts, grants, or cooperative agreements, for fuels management and burned area rehabilitation activities, and for training and monitoring associated with such activities: Provided further, That activities specified in the preceding proviso may occur on Federal land, or on non-Federal land when such activities benefit resources on Federal land or Federally-recognized Tribal land:***

These two provisos authorize Interior to enter into procurement mechanisms (i.e., contracts, grants, and cooperative agreements) for fuels management and burned area rehabilitation activities, and training and monitoring for such activities, to be conducted on Federal land or on non-Federal land when such activities benefit resources on Federal or Federally-recognized Tribal land. The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law 119-4), continues the proviso that

is limited to fuels management on non-Federal land that is adjacent to Federal land. The 2026 Budget proposes to modify the current authority to include not only fuels management but also burned area rehabilitation. Further, the Budget proposes to expand the language so that benefits of the activities may accrue to Federally-recognized Tribal land, not just Federal land. Finally, the Budget proposes to remove the requirement that eligible non-Federal activities must be on land that is adjacent to Federal land. These proposed changes are intended to increase Interior's flexibility to engage in cross-boundary fuels management and rehabilitation with non-Federal partners for work that benefits multiple jurisdictions.

5. ***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:***

The language allows USWFS to enter into cost-shared cooperative agreements.

6. ***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 local private, nonprofit, or cooperative entities, Youth Conservation Corps crews, small or micro-business, or other entities that will hire or train a significant percentage of the workforce locally. The proviso defines “significant” as 50 percent or more. Further,

7. ***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 the Secretary to formulate and distribute guidance for field staff to use these contracts.

8. ***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 USWFS 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.

9. ***Provided further, That the Secretary may use the funds appropriated in this Act 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 USWFS to enter into leases with local governments for properties necessary to provide wildland firefighting facilities and to provide payment in advance for any construction activities, if necessary.

- 10. Provided further, That the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture may authorize the transfer of funds appropriated for any wildland fire purpose between the Departments and may transfer funds made available to their respective Departments and agencies for activities related to Federal wildland fire missions among and between the Departments and agencies affected by the establishment and implementation of the United States Wildland Fire Service:***

This language provides that the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture may authorize the transfer of funds for any wildland fire purpose between the departments and, further, may transfer funds made available to each respective department for wildland fire within and between the departments and agencies affected by the establishment and implementation of the USWFS.

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

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

- 12. Provided further, That funds appropriated under this heading shall be available for assistance to or through the Departments of State or Defense in connection with forest and rangeland research, technical information, and assistance in foreign countries, and, with the concurrence of the appropriate Secretary, 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 proviso allows Interior's USWFS personnel and services to be used to assist foreign countries with the concurrence of the Secretaries of State or Defense, in support of forestry, wildland fire management, and related natural resource activities, including technical assistance, education, training and cooperation outside the United States. The Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Public Law 119-4), continues this proviso for the Department of State. The 2026 Budget request proposes to add the Department of Defense to this proviso because of its increasing engagement in wildland fire management and operations internationally.

- 13. Provided further, That any moneys received by the United States as a result of the compromise or settlement of any claim whether sounding in tort, contract, or any other cause of action involving present or potential damage to lands managed by the Departments of the Interior or Agriculture resulting from wildland fires shall be credited to this account and shall be available until expended.***

This language provides that any funding the United States receives resulting from the compromise or settlement of a claim involving present or potential damage to Interior-administered or USDA-

administered land resulting from wildland fires may be credited to the Wildland Fire Service Operations account and remain available until it is expended.



A wildland fire vehicle surveys a wildfire in Wyoming. Photo by FWS.

Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund Account

DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR U.S. WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE

Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund (Legislative proposal, not subject to PAYGO) (Including Transfers of Funds)

Contingent upon the enactment of legislation establishing within the Department of the Interior an agency known as the United States Wildland Fire Service responsible for carrying out all aspects of the Federal wildland fire missions currently assigned to the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, in addition to the amounts provided under the heading “United States Wildland Fire Service Operations”, \$2,850,000,000, to remain available until transferred, is additional new budget authority as specified for purposes of section 251(b)(2)(F) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985: Provided, That such amounts may be transferred to and merged with amounts made available under the heading “United States Wildland Fire Service Operations” for wildfire suppression operations in the fiscal year in which such amounts are transferred: Provided further, That the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture may transfer funds made available to their respective Departments and agencies for activities related to Federal wildland fire missions among and between the Departments and agencies affected by the establishment and implementation of the United States Wildland Fire Service.

Note.—This account is operating under the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025 (Division A of Public Law 119–4).

**DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE**

Appropriation: Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund (Including Transfers of Funds)

1. *Contingent upon the enactment of legislation establishing within the Department of the Interior an agency known as the United States Wildland Fire Service responsible for carrying out all aspects of the Federal wildland fire missions currently assigned to the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, in addition to the amounts provided under the heading “United States Wildland Fire Service Operations”, \$2,850,000,000, to remain available until transferred, is additional new budget authority as specified for purposes of section 251(b)(2)(F) of the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985:*

Contingent on enactment of legislation establishing USWFS in Interior, this proviso makes available funding for wildfire suppression operations costs in addition to funding provided under the new Wildland Fire Service Operations appropriation. The language further provides that such funding is available until transferred and that \$2,850,000,000 is the amount of this additional new budget authority for FY 2026.

2. *Provided, That such amounts may be transferred to and merged with amounts made available under the heading “United States Wildland Fire Service Operations” 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 wildfire suppression operations may be transferred to and merged with suppression operations funding provided in the same fiscal year through the Wildland Fire Service Operations account.

3. *Provided further, That the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture may transfer funds made available to their respective Departments and agencies for activities related to Federal wildland fire missions among and between the Departments and agencies affected by the establishment and implementation of the United States Wildland Fire Service.:*

This language provides that the Secretaries of the Interior and Agriculture may transfer funds made available to each respective department for activities related to Federal wildland fire missions among and between the departments and agencies affected by the establishment and implementation of the USWFS.

General Provisions

TITLE IV—GENERAL PROVISIONS

Firefighter Pay Cap

SEC. 426. Section 1701 of division B of the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act (5 U.S.C. 5547 note), as amended, is further amended in subsections (a), (b), and (c) by striking “2021 or 2022 or 2023 or 2024” each place it appears and inserting “calendar years 2021 through 2026”.

Transfer of Funds, Wildland Fire

(Legislative proposal, not subject to PAYGO)

SEC. 434. Contingent upon the enactment of legislation establishing within the Department of the Interior an agency known as the United States Wildland Fire Service responsible for carrying out all aspects of the Federal wildland fire missions currently assigned to the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, in order to implement an orderly transition to the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, may transfer funds among and between the Departments and agencies affected by the reorganization.

TITLE IV—GENERAL PROVISIONS

General Provision: Firefighter Pay Cap

SEC. 426. Section 1701 of division B of the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act (5 U.S.C. 5547 note), as amended, is further amended in subsections (a), (b), and (c) by striking “2021 or 2022 or 2023 or 2024” each place it appears and inserting “calendar years 2021 through 2026”.

This general provision amends the Extending Government Funding and Delivering Emergency Assistance Act to extend the waiver of the premium pay cap limitation for wildland fire personnel through 2026. The waiver authority has helped to ensure that Interior and USDA FS can mobilize all needed personnel to support wildfire suppression by removing the potential disincentive effect of the premium pay limitation. For 2024, 54 Interior employees received compensation owed to them as a result of the waiver. The new Incident Response Premium pay enacted in the Full-Year Continuing Appropriations Act, 2025 (Public Law 119-4) likely will lead to an increase in the number of wildland fire personnel who will reach the premium pay cap for 2025 and 2026.

General Provision: Transfer of Funds, Wildland Fire (Legislative proposal, not subject to PAYGO)

SEC. 434. Contingent upon the enactment of legislation establishing within the Department of the Interior an agency known as the United States Wildland Fire Service responsible for carrying out all aspects of the Federal wildland fire missions currently assigned to the Departments of the Interior and Agriculture, the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture, in order to implement an orderly transition to the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, may transfer funds among and between the Departments and agencies affected by the reorganization.

This general provision authorizes the Secretary of the Interior and the Secretary of Agriculture to transfer funds among and between the two departments and agencies—contingent upon the enactment of legislation establishing the USWFS in Interior—to implement an orderly transition to the new service.

Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act FY 2026 Spend Plan

Introduction

The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act (IIJA) appropriated to Interior \$262.6 million in supplemental funding for wildland fire management for Fiscal Year (FY) 2026. This supplemental funding is available until expended.

This spend plan responds to a requirement in IIJA (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.

NOTE: The 2026 Budget request proposes to consolidate wildland fire programs and activities of Interior and USDA FS in Interior, establishing the new USWFS. The following spend plan covers only Interior wildland fire management. For USDA FS’s FY 2026 IIJA spend plan, see USDA FS’s budget justification.

Table 5 shows the planned apportionment and total appropriations for Interior wildland fire management, by program activity, for FY 2026:

Table 5: Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act Planned Appropriations Apportionment for FY 2026
Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act
Planned Apportionment of Appropriations for FY 2026
Department of the Interior
Wildland Fire Service Operations^{1,2}
(Dollars in Thousands)

Activity/Subactivity	FY 2026 Planned
Preparedness	16,150
Fuels Management	165,000
Other Operations: Burned Area Rehabilitation	80,000
Other Operations: Joint Fire Science Program	1,450
Total	262,600

¹ This table only includes IIJA appropriated funding for Interior’s Wildland Fire Management. The 2026 Budget proposes to establish the new U.S. Wildland Fire Service in Interior and for all unobligated balances of funding for Interior and USDA FS wildland fire—including IIJA—to be transferred to the new Wildland Fire Service Operations account.

² Figures reflect amounts made available in the fiscal year, not estimated allocations or obligations. Amounts are before transfers, including the directed transfer of 0.5 percent of all of the appropriations for Interior’s wildland fire management to the Office of Inspector General.



A wildfire burns on the horizon at sunset in Everglades National Park. Photo by NPS.

Preparedness

FY 2026 Planned Activities

During FY 2026:

- Interior will allocate additional funding for IIJA preparedness activities from FY 2026-apportioned funding and any carryover from prior years.
- Adhering to the direction in IIJA and additional direction from section 5305 of the FY 2023 National Defense Authorization Act (P.L. 117-263), Interior will continue working with USDA FS toward ensuring comprehensive support for wildland firefighter health and well-being. These efforts are linked to workforce retention and recruitment, and they will help to ensure workforce resilience and operational readiness throughout the wildfire year.
- Interior will post a Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) for another round of slip-on tanker unit program financial assistance.
- Interior will continue work with USDA FS and the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on improvements to satellite-based detection and reporting of wildfire starts in all areas in which either the Secretary of the Interior or the Secretary of Agriculture has statutory responsibility for wildland fire protection and prevention.

- Interior will continue work on the Team Awareness Kit server development and deployment as well as assessment of the Radio Integrated Communications Suite deployment and use on wildland fire by communications unit leaders.

Fuels Management

FY 2026 Planned Activities

During FY 2026:

- Interior will allocate additional funding for IJA fuels management activities from FY 2026-apportioned funding and any carryover from FY 2025.
- In coordination with the National Association of State Foresters and other partners, Interior will begin to utilize a 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.
- Interior will submit an IJA-required annual report to Congress on the number of acres of land on which projects carried out using the IJA's funds improved the Fire Regime Condition Class.



As part of a fuels management project in collaboration with local communities in Alaska to remove beetle-infested trees, BLM issued nearly 200 free firewood permits. Photo by BLM.

Burned Area Rehabilitation

FY 2026 Planned Activities

During FY 2026:

- Interior will allocate additional funding for IIA BAR activities from FY 2026-apportioned funding and any carryover from FY 2025.
- Interior will use IIA funding available early in the fiscal year to implement time-sensitive post-fire seeding and recovery.
- Interior will continue to expand cross-boundary collaboration within Interior and with Federal 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.
- Interior wildland fire will continue the partnership with Interior’s U.S. Geological Survey to develop science and research to meet the Department’s unique fire management needs, including addressing fire risk.

Joint Fire Science Program

FY 2026 Planned Activities

During FY 2026:

- Interior will allocate the remaining funding appropriated for IIA-funded JFSP research.
- Interior will post additional NOFO announcements for JFSP research and workforce development, including student support.
- Interior plans to complete several more JFSP IIA-funded graduate research projects.
- Interior will continue to support and manage the 15 regional projects that comprise the Fire Science Exchange Network.

Compliance with Section 403

Bureaus/Offices funded through the Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies Appropriation are required to inform Congress about planned program assessments for funding used to support Government-wide, Departmental, or Agency initiatives or general operations in annual budget justifications to Congress. This exhibit fulfills the statutory reporting requirements directed in Section 403 Division E of the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2024 (P.L. 118-42) as shown below.

DISCLOSURE OF ADMINISTRATIVE EXPENSES

SEC. 403. The amount and basis of estimated overhead charges, deductions, reserves, or holdbacks, including working capital fund charges, from programs, projects, activities and subactivities to support government-wide, departmental, agency, or bureau administrative functions or headquarters, regional, or central operations shall be presented in annual budget justifications and subject to approval by the Committees on Appropriations of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Changes to such estimates shall be presented to the Committees on Appropriations for approval.

Table 6: External Administrative Costs: Working Capital Fund

Working Capital Fund <i>Dollars in Thousands (\$000)</i>						
Activity	2025 Notional¹ (Estimate)			2026 Request² (Estimate)		
	Central	Direct	TOTAL	Central	Direct	TOTAL
OS Shared Services	53	9	62	47	9	56
<i>OS-OWF</i>	53	9	62	47	9	56
OS Activities	429	2	431	445	2	447
IT Shared Services	114	495	609	131	594	725
<i>OS-OWF</i>	114	495	609	131	594	725
Interior Business Center	0	270	270	0	460	460
TOTAL, WCF Billing	596	776	1,372	623	1,066	1,689

¹ The 2025 Notional amounts show funding for the Department of the Interior's current Wildland Fire Management account only. FY 2025 resource levels are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the "Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025" (P.L. 119-4) to revise 2025 spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

² The 2026 Request column shows requested funding associated with Interior's current wildland fire management program. It does not reflect all funding requested for the new USWFS. Total resource needs will be determined as Working Capital Fund requirements are finalized for the USWFS.

Table 6 displays payments by the Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) to DOI's Working Capital Fund (WCF) to support the Wildland Fire Management (WFM) program. The OS Shared Services amounts include payments for centrally-billed administrative services, including property services, security services,

building management, and financial services. The 2025 and 2026 levels also reflect the unification of Communications services from OWF into the Office of the Secretary. Similar business function unification for the WFM bureaus is reflected in the individual bureau 2026 budget justifications and is not displayed here. These internal overhead charges will be incorporated into the USWFS operations program, as appropriate, as operational details are finalized. Finally, Table 6 includes amounts paid by OWF for shared information technology (IT) services, including desktop services, licenses, and unified messaging.

Table 7: External Administrative Costs: Bureau Administrative Costs

Bureau Administrative Costs¹		
<i>Dollars in Thousands (\$000)</i>		
Cost Description	2025 Notional^{1/} (Estimate)	2026 Request^{2/} (Estimate)
National Program Support	24,670	18,920
<i>BIA</i>	797	797
<i>BLM</i>	20,339	14,194
<i>FWS</i>	3,354	3,500
<i>NPS</i>	180	429
Regional/State Program Support	36,806	41,186
<i>BIA</i>	11,904	11,904
<i>BLM</i>	24,902	29,282
Holdbacks, Reserves, and Deductions	0	0
TOTAL, Bureau Administrative Costs	61,476	60,106

¹ The 2025 Notional amounts show funding for the Department of the Interior’s current Wildland Fire Management account only. FY 2025 resource levels are estimates. The President reserves his authority under the “Full-Year Continuing Appropriations and Extensions Act, 2025” (P.L. 119-4) to revise 2025 spending within the amounts provided by Congress.

² The 2026 Request column shows requested funding associated with Interior’s current wildland fire management program. It does not reflect all funding requested for the proposed USWFS. Total resource needs will be determined as requirements are finalized for the USWFS.

Table 7 displays WFM bureaus’ internal overhead charges that will be assessed against the amounts requested elsewhere in the budget justification. These include funding for support by headquarters and regional operations and oversight, including regional and headquarters “cross-charging.” These internal overhead charges will be incorporated into the USWFS operations program, as appropriate, as operational details are finalized.

- **National Program Support** – The assessments by bureau are as follows:
 - **BIA:** \$797,000 in each year for bureau human resources support and for the BIA WCF (including administrative and contract support);

- **BLM:** \$9,517,000 in 2025 and \$9,194,000 in 2026 for the BLM WCF direct and centrally-billed initiatives and the BLM Director’s priorities, \$2,882,000 in 2025 for the National Operations Center for procurement, human resources, IT, and data management services that are centrally-billed for the bureau (unified into OS for 2026), \$2,953,000 in 2025 for support for bureau headquarters for oversight, external affairs, IT, law enforcement, human resources, and business practices (unified into OS for 2026), and \$4,987,000 in 2025 and \$5,000,000 in 2026 for the Office of Aviation Services central bill;
- **FWS:** \$3,354,000 in 2025 and \$3,350,000 in 2026 for the FWS non-resource management user payment, which pays for administrative services consumed by non-resource management programs. This pays a share of the bureau’s communications services, workers’ compensation costs, Washington and regional office administrative costs, and unemployment compensation. Assessments are based on FTE usage; and
- **NPS:** \$180,000 in 2025 and \$429,000 in 2026 for central support provided nationally in the bureau.
- **Regional/State Program Support** – The assessments by bureau are as follows (neither FWS nor NPS has anything to report for this category of assessments):
 - **BIA:** \$11,904,000 in each year for state, district, and field office administrative support and for payment of the indirect costs of Tribal Nations for their WFM programs and activities; and
 - **BLM:** \$24,902,000 in 2025 and \$29,282,000 in 2026 for payment of state-level indirect costs, including administrative support at the state, district, and field office level, procurement, human resources, and IT services.

Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act Report

The Good Accounting Obligation in Government Act (GAO-IG Act, P.L. 115-414) enacted January 3, 2019, requires that 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.

DOI leadership takes audit follow-up very seriously and considers our external auditors, to include the Government Accountability Office (GAO) and Office of Inspector General, valued partners in not only improving DOI’s management and compliance obligations but also enhancing its programmatic and administrative operations. As stewards of taxpayer resources, DOI applies cost-benefit analysis and enterprise risk management principles in recommendation implementation decisions.

DOI’s GAO-IG Act Report is available at the following link: <https://www.doi.gov/cj>.