



Memorandum

October 12, 2022

To: Assistant Secretaries, Heads of Agencies and Offices

From: National Invasive Species Council Co-Chairs:

Janet Coit, Acting Assistant Secretary for Oceans and Atmosphere  
and Assistant Administrator for Fisheries, NOAA  
U.S. Department of Commerce

Andrea Delgado, Chief of Staff, Natural Resources and Environment  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Eric Werwa, Deputy Assistant Secretary, Policy and Environmental  
Management  
U.S. Department of the Interior

Wildland Fire Leadership Council Co-Chairs:

Meryl Harrell, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment  
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Joan Mooney, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary, Policy, Management  
and Budget

Exercising the Delegated Authority of the Assistant Secretary,  
Policy, Management and Budget

U.S. Department of the Interior

Subject: Integrating and Coordinating Wildland Fire and Invasive Species Management  
Efforts

## I. Purpose

This memorandum provides direction for the Departments' Agencies and Offices to provide appropriate support and resources to the integration and coordination of wildland fire and invasive species management efforts.

## II. Background

The interaction between invasive species, particularly invasive plants, and wildfire is presenting increased risks to the integrity of natural ecosystems, human safety, and rural economies in areas

throughout the U.S. In many cases, climate change is accelerating this invasive species-wildfire cycle, impacting wildfire frequency, size, intensity, and characteristics. As stewards of federally managed public lands and conservation partners with state, tribal, and local governments and other stakeholders, federal agencies have an obligation to address and mitigate these risks.

Effective management of the invasive species/wildfire problem requires increased attention to coordination of invasive species and wildland fire management on the landscape before, during, and after fires, as well as more generally to funding and resource streams, information and data, and research and development. Recognizing the growing severity of this issue, in 2020 the National Invasive Species Council (NISC) and the Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) formed a partnership to identify opportunities for coordination, leverage federal actions across and between the wildland fire and invasive species communities, and build collaboration and engagement with non-federal partners.<sup>1</sup>

Recognizing the need to integrate and align management efforts, the NISC/WFLC partnership identified a set of 13 opportunities that can advance interagency coordination (see Appendix I). These opportunities reinforce the need for a data-driven, science-based approach to address invasive plant/wildfire interactions, particularly with regard to invasive plant control for pre-fire fuels management and post-fire rehabilitation to prevent (re)invasion by non-native plants.

Significant initiatives in this area are already underway within agencies and with external partners, but further effort is needed to identify spatial priorities, consider trade-offs, and amplify efforts where we can be most effective. Such actions can additionally support administration objectives as identified in agency invasive species and wildland fire management plans, objectives for the use of Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) funding, and relevant Executive Orders addressing climate change, U.S. forests, and underserved communities.

### **III. Direction**

The Co-Chairs of NISC and WFLC confirm their commitment to work together on these actions and encourage agency leadership to provide direction around appropriate resources and support to address the intersection of invasive species and wildland fire. As such, we encourage you and your programs to:

- Support spatial prioritization efforts to identify key geographies to focus management efforts using a data-driven approach that leverages and builds upon existing databases and information systems.
- Recognize the importance of the NISC/WFLC joint opportunities and crosswalk them with ongoing agency activities in key geographies to identify points of leverage, critical needs/gaps, and additional opportunities for interagency coordination.
- Engage non-federal partners and experts on invasive species and wildland fire in these efforts, consider integration of indigenous knowledge (IK), and support regional dialogues and exercises to inform strategic planning.
- Leverage existing programs and networks to advance information exchange and identify joint research priorities.
- Integrate the outputs of the spatial prioritization efforts, opportunities crosswalk, non-federal engagements, and joint research priorities referenced above in future strategic planning exercises, including allocation of BIL funding, future budget requests, and other agency appropriations.

- Work with NISC and WFLC to develop an invasive species-wildland fire framework to coordinate national and regional efforts across federal agencies and non-federal partners.
- Identify other opportunities within and across departments to support and advance these efforts.

The NISC/WFLC partnership maintains a standing interagency task team, which will continue to meet regularly to support and track progress toward implementation of the direction in this memo. The task team along with NISC and WFLC staff are available to facilitate and support agency engagement on these issues.

---

<sup>1</sup>Established by Executive Order in 1999, NISC provides the vision and leadership to coordinate, sustain, and expand federal efforts to safeguard the interests of the United States from the negative impacts of invasive species. NISC is co-chaired by the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, and the Interior, and includes representation from nine other Federal departments and four White House offices.

Established in 2002, WFLC provides strategic recommendations to ensure policy coordination, accountability, and effective implementation of Federal Wildland Fire Management Policy and related long-term strategies. This collaborative environment helps to ensure effective and efficient wildland fire management, promote fire-adapted communities, and create resilient landscapes to achieve long-range benefits for society and nature. Created by an MOU of the Secretaries of the Departments of Agriculture, Defense, Homeland Security, and the Interior, WFLC's 19 members represent Federal departments and agencies as well as elected state, Tribal Nation, and local government officials.

## APPENDIX I

### **NISC/WFLC Opportunities for Coordinated Efforts to Address Intersections between Invasive Species and Wildland Fire**

The following actions are a subset of opportunities that were prioritized through a process of agency review facilitated by the joint National Invasive Species Council (NISC)/Wildland Fire Leadership Council (WFLC) task team. While implementation of some aspects of these opportunities is already underway, many require additional leadership support, direction, and/or resources to do so in a more strategic and coordinated manner. Agencies involved included the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, and the Interior. Please address questions or comments to Stas Burgiel, NISC ([stanley\\_burgiel@ios.doi.gov](mailto:stanley_burgiel@ios.doi.gov)) or Mike Zupko, WFLC ([mike@zup-co-inc.com](mailto:mike@zup-co-inc.com)).

- 1) Proactive and Pre-fire Management
  - a) Coordinate strategic planning and leadership across federal agencies and partners to better identify and address policy needs, budget allocations, operations, response, and monitoring. Such efforts should recognize national programs and efforts, while also targeting action in high priority ecoregions.
  - b) Develop spatially-zoned wildland fire and invasive plant management strategies that reduce the establishment and spread of invasive plants that fuel wildfires, degrade native ecosystems, and increase the probability of loss from wildfire to human life, homes and infrastructure, cultural and natural resources, and other values. Identify resource allocation and management actions required to implement both invasive plant and wildland fire management strategies.
  - c) Invest additional resources and capacity to enhance early, aggressive invasive plant management as a preventative measure to sustain resilient and resistant native plant communities and natural wildfire processes and patterns including through interagency and non-federal partnerships.
  - d) Identify and support programs and initiatives that can provide coordinated implementation for management efforts in high priority eco-regions.
- 2) Wildfire Response
  - a) Identify data sources for the locations of invasive plants likely to alter native, functioning ecosystems as a result of wildfire activity or that are likely to spread through wildland fire management actions. Incorporate this threat information into relevant wildland fire decision support tools and management plans.
- 3) Wildfire Recovery and Restoration
  - a) Reconcile appropriations, program structure, program directives, and strategies for federal post-fire programs in a way that coordinates across agencies and recognizes invasive species management considerations in those recovery efforts.

- b) Provide natural resource program guidance, fire planning, and support to local management units transitioning from short-term post-fire actions to establish, implement, and sustain long-term restoration and recovery strategies that break the cycle of uncharacteristic wildfire resulting from invasive plants and contributing to increased invasive plants after a wildfire.
- 4) Funding
- a) Identify agency funding streams and programs for wildland fire, vegetation, and invasive plant management programs, as well as mechanisms for the strategic allocation of resources and transfer of funds between agencies and with partners.
  - b) Provide program guidance and funding to local management units to establish, implement, and sustain restoration and recovery strategies beyond short-term post-fire program actions. This can include working with Burned Area Emergency Response, Emergency Stabilization, and Burned Area Rehabilitation programs to consider and utilize resources to address post-fire invasion management and work toward long-term sustainability.
- 5) Information, Data, and Management Tools
- a) Collate information and data for the development of spatially zoned invasive plant, fuels, and wildfire management strategies that reduce the establishment and spread of invasive plants that fuel wildfires, degrade native ecosystems, and increase the probability of loss from wildfire to human life, cultural and natural resources, homes, infrastructure, and other values.
- 6) Research and Development
- a) Develop a state of the science report focused at the ecoregional level that informs key research and management needs identified in this paper. The report would address ecoregional differences, collate existing research, and identify areas for additional investigation. Topics could include:
    - i) how invasive plant infestations affect wildfire regimes and pathways for their introduction (e.g., fuel breaks, vehicles, equipment);
    - ii) how wildfires affect plant invasions;
    - iii) how and/or where wildland fire can be used to manage invasive plants;
    - iv) what are the most effective ways to manage invasive plants in pre- and post-fire landscapes; and
    - v) what are the most effective ways to manage invasive plants during restoration of fire-dependent ecosystems.
  - b) Research how to better integrate invasive plant control and prescribed burning for production forestry, fire-dependent ecosystems, and restoration.
  - c) Develop strategies and mechanisms to ensure that research results inform invasive species and wildland fire management through co-production, communication, technology transfer, and/or other approaches.