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**File Code:** 2450; 5100**Date:** July 26, 2023**Route To:****Subject:** PAL Management**To:** Forest Supervisors

This letter is a reminder of my direction and emphasis regarding the management of the Project Activity Level (PAL) system utilized on timber sales, stewardship contracts, stewardship agreements, service contracts, and special use permits throughout the Region. Forests have done a good job managing the PAL system and we want to issue this reminder to continue this positive trend.

We are currently experiencing a wildfire crisis that requires urgent action. The intent is to keep Timber Sale Purchasers, Logging Contractors, as well as other Contractors and Permittees who utilize PAL, working in the woods as long as reasonably possible. The Forest Service has the sole discretion to manage the daily PAL values at the Forest Level, and Line Officers, Contract and Special Use Administration Teams, and the Fire Management Staff are encouraged to collaborate to achieve that goal.

Daily management objectives of PAL were to identify and mitigate any anomalies in the predicted PAL values, especially in the early-spring, late-fall, and periods of unusual weather conditions during the operating season and continue to balance the need for accomplishing the work against the risk of an unwanted ignition resulting in a large fire.

We need to continue to actively manage the daily PAL values at the forest-level. Tips and tools to help develop and maintain the situational awareness in accomplishing this task are included in the Frequently Asked Questions and R5 PAL Toolkit posted on the PAL Webpage.

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/r5/fire-aviation/management/?cid=stelprdb5372656>

The concern regarding the decision maker's liability in the case of a good decision resulting in a bad outcome (a large fire) continues to plague the daily management process, often resulting in a Forest posting only the predicted activity levels without any management involvement. The Regional Office expects informed decisions and supports Line Officers and other decision makers when decisions are based on scientific data linked to the PAL.



This letter empowers decision makers to actively manage PAL values based on recent PAL history (Predicted versus Actual), the short and long-term weather forecasts, an evaluation of current fire activity, and the Forest's current firefighting capabilities, along with local knowledge and experience. Fire Danger Operating Plans (FDOP) offer a tool that can formalize the process for forests to manage PAL values. If there is a process for PAL management in the unit's FDOP, that process should be followed. If not, any processes and rationale used in PAL management should be documented and the changes communicated to end users. Future FDOP revisions should include a process for updating PAL levels based on scientific analysis, local knowledge, and observed conditions.

Questions related to the contractual aspects of PAL should be directed to Brad Seaberg, Timber Sale Administration Program Leader, at (530) 648-6883 or [bradford.seaberg@usda.gov](mailto:bradford.seaberg@usda.gov). Questions related to the fire danger aspects of PAL and management of the daily values should be directed to Daniel Michael, Regional Fire Planner, Strategic Services, at (530) 551-1708 or [daniel.michael@usda.gov](mailto:daniel.michael@usda.gov).

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John G. Church (for:)  
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Signed by: JOHN CHURCH

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Regional Forester

cc: Diana Craig, Rick Hopson, Daniel Michael, Jaime Gamboa, Brad Seaberg, Wyatt Palin