



File Code: 1300**Date:** April 24, 2024**Route To:****Subject:** 2024 Letter of Intent for Wildland Fires**To:** Regional Foresters, Station Directors, Deputy Chief's and WO Directors

Last year we significantly progressed toward achieving many of our top Agency priorities; I'm proud of the efforts of each and every employee. The tremendous achievements of 2023 set the stage for a promising 2024. Our collective commitment and resilience turned vision into action. We faced challenges head-on, with significant contributions from employees, at all levels, at home and abroad. Our historic achievement to treat over 4.3 million acres of hazardous fuels underscores our dedication to accelerate strategic investments and intentionally allocate expertise.

All signs point to a very active 2024 fire year. We will continue safe, effective initial attack to protect communities, critical infrastructure, and natural resources. In doing so, I expect all leaders to put our people first as they put themselves in harm's way to protect communities and landscapes. Your role as leaders is pivotal to sustaining our organization and ensuring our employees feel safe—psychologically, physically and socially. Safety is one of our core values. As such, I expect us to remain committed to a safe and resilient workforce which also means continued emphasis on employee wellbeing. Setting clear expectations for resource availability is vital to managing employee mental and physical fatigue and balancing wildfire response demands with hazardous fuels reduction needs. As I stated last year, we will continue to support and defend any employee who is doing work to support our mission. I also expect us to continue to address instances of harassment or bullying immediately and reflect these policies in our work environment and in your delegation letters.

Acknowledging the inherent risks in suppressing wildfires, I expect us to continue to use all available tools and technologies to ensure proactive prescribed fire planning and implementation, fire detection, risk assessments, fire response, and post-fire recovery. Every fire will receive a risk-informed response; we know the most effective strategies are collaboratively carried-out, at the local level. I expect all line officers and fire leaders to be inclusive with stakeholders during pre-season collaboration. This builds a common understanding of strategic risk assessments, strategic actions to protect identified values at risk, and expected fire response. The best research-informed tool we have for doing this is Potential Operational Delineations (PODs). Pre-planning with Potential Operational Delineations (PODs), better forecasting and knowledge of existing fuel treatments, and risk-sharing dialogue with community members, stakeholders, and cooperators, will help us make informed decisions that balance resource objectives with safety and community protection. I expect all line officers and fire managers to make use of PODs, which should be nearly complete in the West, or alternative science-based means for



ensuring effective pre-season collaboration. When looking at using all tools in the toolbox, line officers should also ensure they are working in close collaboration with affected partners like industry, including the ability to mobilize resources in a collaborative manner through mechanisms like the National Alliance of Forest Owners Fire Suppression Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).

As outlined in the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy Addendum Update, we will depend on research to inform our use of both planned and unplanned fire, and natural ignitions. This year, Regional Foresters will again approve or disapprove use of natural ignitions as a management strategy during Preparedness Levels 4 and 5, in accordance with the Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation (Red Book). Increasingly, we see the potential for fire to increase landscape resilience when conditions permit.

Our focus must remain on achieving our “Wildfire Crisis Strategy” landscape restoration goals, while fulfilling our leadership role in emergency response. In 2023 the agency built a strong foundation to help us achieve these goals, including using emergency authorities to support the “Wildfire Crisis Strategy,” releasing the National Prescribed Fire Resource Mobilization Strategy, and “A Strategy to Expand Prescribed Fire in the West”, establishing the Community Wildfire Defense Grant Program, and expanding partnerships through our Keystone Agreements. I expect us to lean into these innovations in 2024; but I am also challenging all of us collectively to keep pushing forward to unlock new innovations. This means viewing our landscapes holistically together with partners; truly being inclusive by inviting new partners to the table; and learning from our Tribal partners and their indigenous ecological knowledge gained from managing fire since time immemorial.

To keep moving forward on our journey to destigmatize mental health and wellness support, we will continue to offer care services including Critical Incident Stress Management, Casualty Assistance and Employee Assistance programs. Access to culturally competent clinical care for wildland firefighters is something the Joint Wildland Firefighter Health and Wellbeing Program with the U.S. Department of the Interior will continue to develop. Through this program, clinician-led mental health education sessions will be made available for units before the height of the fire year to reinforce the importance of employee wellbeing. Claims processes and employee coverage for presumptive illnesses have changed and I expect leaders to ensure they and their employees receive sufficient information and training. We must be ready to personally engage in support of our employees needing those services.

It is my expectation we will adhere to the seven tactical recommendations of the 2022 National Prescribed Fire Program Review. Agency Administrators will continue to authorize a new ignition for each operational period while considering fuels and potential fire behavior in areas adjacent to the planned burn and documenting regionally relevant drought metrics. A declared wildfire review will be the standard approach whenever a prescribed fire is declared a wildfire. Forest Service Manual 5140 and the NWCG Standards for Prescribed Fire Planning and Implementation, PMS 484, will dictate declared wildfire reviews.

These combined efforts, and remaining anchored in our core values of safety, interdependence, conservation, diversity, and service, are paving the path to a future where the Forest Service remains the world’s expert in fire management and a trusted employer of choice.

In closing, I thank you for your commitment to put people first. We will stay the course and continue to fight for a permanent pay increase for firefighters, as well as pay stability for all incident responders. I also thank each of our employees for their continued dedication to the agency mission and service to the Nation.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Randy Moore". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R" and a stylized "M".

RANDY MOORE
Chief