

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING
between
U. S. WILDLAND FIRE SERVICE
of the
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
and the
INTERTRIBAL TIMBER COUNCIL
concerning
WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT

This Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of the Interior's (DOI) United States Wildland Fire Service, and the Intertribal Timber Council affirms the shared commitment to safeguard lives, communities, Federal trust responsibility, reserved and treaty assets, cultural resources, and ecosystems from the growing risk of extreme wildfires. Both organizations recognize that the increasing severity and complexity of wildfires require a coordinated, forward-looking approach grounded in trust, transparency, and shared priorities.

In accordance with the intent and direction of Executive Order (EO) 14308 and Secretary's Order (SO) 3448, titled "Establishment of the U.S. Wildland Fire Service, the parties agree to empower Indian self-determination and Tribal sovereignty, deepen collaboration, strengthen Tribal stewardship partnerships, integrate Indigenous knowledge, streamline operational response, and proactively enhance the resilience of DOI and Tribal lands. This MOU establishes a common vision for collaborative, innovative, and community-focused wildland fire management that advances the safety, health, and resilience of people, communities, and landscapes.

I. Parties

U.S. Wildland Fire Service (USWFS)

USWFS is responsible for developing wildland fire management policy, ensuring program oversight and accountability, protecting personnel safety, and providing operational response and coordination for DOI-managed lands. Through collaborative work with many partners, USWFS strives to integrate science, technology, and data-driven decision-making across diverse landscapes to enhance response capability, reduce risk, and restore and maintain resilient landscapes. USWFS has authority to enter into this agreement pursuant to Reorganization Plan No. 3 of 1950 (64 Stat. 1262) and SO 3448.

Intertribal Timber Council (ITC)

ITC is the leading intertribal organization that supports the common goals of approximately 60 Indian Tribes with significant forested landscapes. It is a consortium of Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and individuals dedicated to improving the management of forested Tribal lands and other natural resources important to Tribal communities. ITC accomplishes its goals through cooperation, collaboration, and the sharing of information among its members and other non-Tribal partners, including the Federal Government.

II. Background

The principles of effective wildland fire management are grounded in the values of cooperation and collaboration. In fulfilling its statutory commitments to protect people, communities, and resources from the risks of wildfire and to restore public and Tribal lands affected by wildfires, USWFS adopts a collaborative approach to wildland fire management and is committed to increasing effectiveness in wildfire response and promoting landscape resilience. Similarly, in advocating for Tribal stewardship of natural resources, ITC has an interest in working closely and coordinating with a range of partners to influence the management of Tribal lands in support of Tribal sovereignty. ITC also has an interest in promoting projects that enhance and protect off-reservation and treaty resources and rights. Through this partnership, USWFS can collaborate to build wildland fire management capacity and enhance wildland fire resources needed in Tribal communities. These practices are key to advancing Tribal communities and protecting trust assets.

Both parties acknowledge that:

1. The historical recognition and future preservation of Tribal connection and stewardship to the land requires meaningful communication and ongoing collaboration with USWFS in all aspects of wildland fire management.
2. Tribal lands, cultures, and fire management needs are diverse and continually evolving. Effective wildland fire programs must be tailored to each Tribe that incorporates priorities of sovereign Tribal governments, ecological conditions, and Indigenous knowledge.
3. Collaboration between USWFS and Tribes is needed to ensure equitable allocation, appropriate programmatic funding, and the development of budget justifications that support Tribal wildland fire management needs.
4. The proximity and interconnectedness of DOI-administered lands with Tribal lands and resources benefit from consistent communication and collaboration on wildland fire management issues, and this ensures that Tribal reserved and treaty resources on ceded lands and usual and accustomed areas outside reservations are also prioritized.
5. Persistent drought, fuel accumulation, and other factors are driving larger, more complex, and destructive wildfires that threaten Tribal homelands, lifeways, and trust resources.
6. USWFS and ITC share common goals and objectives consistent with EO 14308 and SO 3448, including strengthening wildfire response capability, mitigating wildfire risk, promoting resilient landscapes, and supporting post-wildfire recovery.
7. Preventing and effectively managing wildfires is vitally important for protecting Tribal communities, economies, and traditional uses of lands and resources, and requires proactive, coordinated, and Indigenous-led approaches within the wildland fire management program.
8. Transparent communication, consistent collaboration, and co-developed priorities and strategies are key to maximizing the benefits of mutual investments.
9. USWFS has a solemn duty to uphold the Federal trust responsibility to Tribal Nations, including the protection of land, resources, and sovereign rights.

III. Mutual Interests and Benefits

USWFS and ITC can mutually benefit by working together to identify common goals, priorities, and strategies through a cooperative, collaborative relationship. This is underscored by the proximity and intersection of Tribal and DOI-administered lands across the landscape. It is therefore beneficial for both organizations to work together to address the following common Federal and Tribal wildland fire management challenges on the landscape:

- Uphold Federal trust obligations and fiduciary responsibilities to Tribal Nations.
- Enhance wildfire response, promote fire-adapted communities, resilient landscapes, and safety for personnel.
- Support Indigenous and prescribed burning practices.
- Restore and maintain lands damaged by wildfires with long-term rehabilitation.
- Boost Tribal economies and preserve traditional land uses.
- Build and strengthen the workforce through outreach, recruitment, training, employment and care.

IV. Scope and Responsibilities

USWFS and ITC agree to undertake mutually beneficial actions to address current and future wildland fire management challenges. In doing so, both organizations recognize and agree to proactively communicate early and often and to provide opportunities for engagement on issues that may affect tribes or tribal values. In support of each organization's missions, the USWFS and ITC agree to work collaboratively to:

1. Establish a Tribal Wildland Fire Manager's forum to create a consistent, action-oriented platform where Tribal Fire Managers from each Geographic Area, Office of Tribal Trust and USWFS leadership can collaboratively develop creative, practical, and effective solutions to wildland fire management challenges. The Forum ensures Tribal Nations have meaningful influence, direction, and integration in the development of policies, processes, systems, priorities, operational strategies, and long-term fire stewardship practices at the national, geographic, and local levels.
2. Leverage wildland fire information technology to enhance decision-making and support effective communication among partners and across relevant jurisdictions.
3. Emphasize common priorities in wildland fire management that can help mitigate impacts and address the challenges associated with wildland fire activity.
4. Collaborate on the development of joint communications materials, such as reports, analyses, papers, and other informational resources, to keep both internal and external audiences informed about pertinent issues as well as shared goals and objectives.
5. Share effective management strategies, skills, and innovative approaches to enhance federal wildland fire management policies and programs, with the aim of improving tribal land management.

6. Collaborate on workforce development, community outreach, and recruitment efforts, striving to create jobs that strengthen both federal and tribal wildland fire management organizations.
7. Promote the sharing of viewpoints and information to foster greater awareness, understanding, and collaboration between the two organizations.

V. Duration

The effective date of this document will commence upon the date of the final signature, and will remain in effect for five years, or as otherwise agreed and modified. Either Party may terminate this MOU upon thirty (30) days written notice to the other Party for any reason, with no further obligation upon the effective date of the termination. This MOU may be amended or modified upon mutual written agreement by both Parties. Amendments or modifications must be signed by the Parties' authorized representatives.

VI. Other Provisions

No funds will be exchanged between the Parties in connection with the provision of services under this agreement. Nothing in this MOU creates a financial obligation, and all provisions of this MOU and any subsequent agreement entered into by Parties pursuant to this MOU are subject to the Federal Anti-Deficiency Act, 31 U.S.C. §§ 1341 *et seq.*

If any part of this MOU is held invalid, illegal, unenforceable, or contrary to any Federal, State, Tribal or local law, the validity and enforceability of remaining provisions will not be affected or impaired. The provisions of this MOU are severable.

VII. Contacts

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VIII. Signatures

BRIAN
FENNESSY

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U.S. Wildland Fire Service

Brian Fennessy
Director/Fire Chief
U.S. Wildland Fire Service

Date: _____



Intertribal Timber Council

Cody Desautel
President
Intertribal Timber Council

Date: 10/5/26