

FEMA, USDA and DOI Jointly Establish New Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission

Release Date: December 17, 2021

WASHINGTON -- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Department of the Interior (DOI) and FEMA today announced the establishment of a Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission. Establishing this commission fulfills a key provision of the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law and represents a critical step in combating the nation's wildfire crisis and improving resilience in America's landscapes.

The commission is tasked with recommending federal policies and strategies to more effectively prevent, mitigate, suppress and manage wildland fires, including rehabilitating land affected from wildland fires. It will include representation from federal, state, tribal, county and municipal governments as well as non-governmental stakeholders from private industry. Through a coordinated effort, the commission will deliver a report to Congress with practical policy recommendations one year from the first meeting. In addition, the commission will outline a strategy to cost effectively meet aerial firefighting equipment needs through 2030.

The commission's work will build on existing interagency federal efforts, such as the [Wildland Fire Leadership Council](#) and the White House Wildfire Resilience Interagency Working Group and will continue to pursue a whole-of-government approach to wildfire risk reduction and resilience.

"The effects of a changing climate are all around us. Americans, especially those in rural communities in the West, are experiencing a growing number of bigger, hotter and more destructive wildfires that threaten people, livelihoods and our natural resources. The commission will bring together a diverse group of leaders to help tackle this crisis and inform our collective ability to improve the health and resilience of our forests and communities," said U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack.



FEMA

Page 1 of 3

“We have a historic opportunity to take action on forest restoration, hazardous fuels management and post-wildfire restoration activities, and better address the needs of federal wildland firefighters,” said Department of the Interior Secretary Deb Haaland. “The commission established under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law will provide valuable insight into ways we can better prepare communities and ecosystems against the threat of wildland fire across our nation's public and tribal lands.”

“This commission represents a unified effort across the federal government to answer a call that is quickly growing louder; we must protect our wildlands from the ravaging impacts of climate change,” said FEMA Administrator Deanne Criswell. “In coordination with our partners at USDA and DOI, FEMA is committed to doing our part to help build readiness and resilience in communities who are at risk from wildfires.”

“Climate change and increasing development in the wildland urban interface are rapidly changing the complexity and response challenges for the fire service. It is time for us all to recognize that wildland fire is not just a forest or rural problem any longer. Urban and suburban fire departments that had no part in wildland firefighting 30 years ago are now heavily engaged in wildland fire prevention, mitigation and response. The wildland urban interface is now the frontier for wildland fire,” said U.S. Fire Administrator Dr. Lori Moore Merrell. “This commission will pull together our partners and stakeholders to focus on community risk reduction, enhanced prevention efforts and overall response and mitigation capacity that matches the wildfire risks within the nation’s wildland urban interface.”

“The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law calls for a dramatic increase in the scale and pace of wildfire mitigation, restoration and post-fire recovery work,” said Mike Zupko, Executive Director of the Wildland Fire Leadership Council. “Success can only be accomplished through dedicated partnerships and collaboration. The Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission will advance our collective ability to combat the nation’s wildfire crisis and accelerate implementation of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy.”

The Bipartisan Infrastructure Law invests unprecedented funding in America’s natural infrastructure. The joint Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission will support the implementation of effective wildfire risk reduction,



FEMA

Page 2 of 3

community risk reduction and resilience strategies to combat the wildfire crisis, recovering and protecting our nation's forests, landscapes and surrounding communities.

USDA touches the lives of all Americans each day in so many positive ways. In the Biden-Harris Administration, USDA is transforming America's food system with a greater focus on more resilient local and regional food production, fairer markets for all producers, ensuring access to safe, healthy and nutritious food in all communities, building new markets and streams of income for farmers and producers using climate smart food and forestry practices, making historic investments in infrastructure and clean energy capabilities in rural America, and committing to equity across the Department by removing systemic barriers and building a workforce more representative of America. To learn more, visit www.usda.gov.



FEMA

Page 3 of 3