U.S. Wildland Fire Service Interim Operational Guidance: Post-Wildfire Recovery Program

1. Executive Summary & Purpose

As delineated in U.S. Wildland Fire Service Policy (USWFS) Memorandum No. 2026-002 (issued April 10, 2026), this document provides further guidance for the development, approval, funding, and execution of Emergency Stabilization (ES) and Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR) programs during the transition phase. This guidance establishes crosswalk responsibilities between the newly unified USWFS personnel and the land management Bureaus (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, and National Park Service) to ensure post-wildfire operational continuity. This document does not address Suppression Repair. The Suppression Repair guidance is found in the Interagency Standards Fire and Aviation Management (Red Book).

2. DOI National Burned Area Emergency Response (BAER) Team

Headquarters (HQ) USWFS provides direct oversight, ordering, and coordination of the DOI National BAER Team. Bureau's Local Unit Line Officers (e.g., Superintendent, Field Manager, Refuge Manager) may request support from the DOI National BAER Team through HQ-USWFS Post-Wildfire Recovery (PWR) Leads. Requests for support must include the Geographic Area (GA) PWR lead.

Bureaus must continue to activate ES and BAR Work Breakdown Structure (WBS) codes for Bureau members on the DOI National BAER Team. Refer to legacy wildland fire budget rules for guidance when charging to BAER/ES and BAR for assessment, planning, and implementation.

3. Plan Development and Approval

All ES and BAR plans must be developed in accordance with the Department Manual Part 620: Wildland Fire Management Chapter 7: Post-Wildfire Recovery, DOI Interagency Burned Area Emergency Response and Burned Area Rehabilitation Guidebooks and the BLM Burned Area Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation Handbook (H-1742-1).

ES and BAR plans must progress sequentially through Bureaus, GA, and HQ-USWFS levels.

3.1 Plan Development & Responsibilities

Primary responsibility for plan development rests with Bureau Local Unit Line Officers. Plans may be developed by the local unit, a GA Team, a DOI National BAER Team, or a collaborative combination.

3.1.2 WBS and Charge Code Activation

Bureaus must continue to activate and monitor ES and BAR WBS codes for all ES and BAR expenditures for post-wildfire projects. USWFS budget staff may continue supporting this effort for their legacy bureaus. The activation of these codes is a mandatory prerequisite prior to the disbursement of funding from the USWFS.

HQ-USWFS will activate and track separate USWFS ES and BAR WBS codes to account for all personnel expenditures incurred by USWFS employees assigned to post-wildfire projects.

3.2 ES Plan Review, Approval Timeline & Authorities

The mandatory review and approval workflow must adhere to the following sequence. ES and BAR actions can be described in the same plan. However, the timelines for plan submission and the process for funding approval differ between the ES and BAR programs.

3.2.1 Bureaus must notify USWFS GA and HQ PWR Leads via email regarding the intent and need to submit an ES Plan within 7 days of containment.

3.2.2 The Local Unit Line Officer reviews, approves, and submits the completed ES plan to the GA and HQ PWR Leads within 21 days of containment. Request for ES plan extensions must be submitted to HQ-USWFS PWR leads within 21 days of containment. Local Unit Line Officers should request an informal, pre-approval review from GA and HQ-USWFS PWR Leads before approving the plans.

3.2.3 GA and HQ PWR Leads concurrently evaluate the plan for policy, fiscal responsibility, and regional consistency within 6 days of submission. Plans requiring edits will be returned to the local unit during this window.

3.2.4 Following a positive recommendation from the GA PWR Lead, the GA Fire Chief (or designated authority) approves the plan.

3.2.5 The Division Chief of Pre & Post-fire, Mitigation and Education (or designated authority) has final HQ-USWFS approval.

3.3 BAR Plans

BAR plans should be submitted concurrently with ES plans and follow the same timelines. Individual BAR plans must be submitted as soon as practical but no later than September 15. BAR plans for fires with containment dates after August 31 must be submitted as soon as practical. The approval process for BAR plans is the same as described for ES plan in Section 3.2.

3.4 Plan Amendments

ES and BAR actions and expenditures must adhere to the approved plan. If Bureaus need to deviate from the approved plan, they must contact the GA and HQ USWFS PWR Leads for guidance on whether the proposed deviation is within the scope of the current plan, or if they will be required to submit an amendment for review and approval prior to deviating from the approved plan. Amendments to the approved plan can be submitted within a fiscal year if the need arises. The annual accomplishment report may also include proposed amendments to the approved plan and should include information on any changes to funding requests for the upcoming fiscal year.

4. Reporting Systems & Data Entry

4.1 Project entries and data tracking differ between the BLM and the other three DOI Bureaus.

BLM: For FY26 and into FY27, plans are prepared, reviewed, and approved within the Vegetation Management Action Portal (VMAP). Because VMAP access currently requires a BLM email account, the HQ-USWFS program lead will coordinate with the applicable GA and manually document GA approval within the portal until broader access is available.

BIA, FWS, and NPS: The Bureau local unit is responsible for entering all project details and funding requests into the Interior Fuels and Post-Fire Reporting System (https://inform-fuels-nifc.hub.arcgis.com/). Deployed DOI BAER teams or USWFS staff may provide data entry support upon request. IFPRS data entry is required prior to funding approval.

4.2 Annual IFPRS/VMAP Reporting: Treatment and activity completion/accomplishment data must be entered into IFPRS or VMAP by September 15. Any accomplishments completed between September 15 and 30 shall be entered the following day.

4.3 Annual Accomplishment Reports/Monitoring Reports: There are no required templates for written reports. ES and BAR reports must outline the funding approved and expended by treatment or activity specification; detail the treatments and activities that were implemented; and document treatment effectiveness as determined through monitoring.

Funding for additional years will not be recommended or approved until accomplishment reports are submitted. Spatial data (polygons) will be required for all post-fire treatments and activities. Reporting due dates will follow legacy Bureau processes. Reports must be submitted to HQ-USWFS PWR Leads with a carbon copy to the GA PWR Leads.

5. Funding Approval Process

ES funding is authorized at the start of each fiscal year as part of the wildfire suppression allocation while BAR funding is allocated to the USWFS at the beginning of the fiscal year or after Congressional appropriations.

5.1 Funding Request

ES and BAR FY27 funding request are due in IFPRS by September 30, 2026. If necessary, the Bureaus can request assistance from the GA or HQ USWFS.

5.2 Allocation and Prioritization

At the beginning of each fiscal year, HQ-USWFS will create the annual program of work (POW) from IFPRS and VMAP. Notably, BAR funding is limited and competitive therefore, prioritization for BAR funding is based on established ranking criteria.

Funding approval will occur once the appropriations have been signed into law and funding is available. HQ-USWFS will formally notify both the GA and the local unit upon official funding approval. Funding will be transferred from HQ-USWFS to the GAs and the Bureaus as identified in the ES and BAR plans.

5.2 Post-Wildfire Account Closeouts & End of Fiscal Year

All unobligated ES and BAR funds must be returned to the HQ-USWFS at the end of each fiscal year. ES funds will be returned to HQ-USWFS and no carryover is permitted. BAR funds will be returned to HQ-USWFS, reprioritized, and reissued to projects for the subsequent fiscal year pending accomplishment reporting.