

Appendix A—USWFS Authorities/Actions

1. Purpose

This United States Wildland Fire Service (USWFS) policy provides clear and efficient standards and procedures for assigning authorities, facilitates management control over exercising authority, and ensures authority is exercised at the lowest practical level.

2. Responsibility

The Director and the Deputy Directors are responsible for ensuring that the ability to exercise authority is assigned to the most appropriate organizational level.

All USWFS Officials are responsible for:

- Ensuring that authorities are exercised within legally stated limits.
- Assigning and reassigning the ability to exercise authorities to the appropriate level of the organization and ensuring full documentation in writing of the assignment/reassignment.

3. Derivation of Authority

Secretary's Order No. 3448, *Establishment of the U.S. Wildland Fire Service*, created the USWFS on January 12, 2026, and delegated to the Director, USWFS, "all authority necessary...to fulfill the Department's wildland fire mission," including any current or future statutory wildland fire authorities applicable to any DOI Bureau or Office.

200 DM 2.3 requires that "[r]edelgations of authority within a bureau or office will be issued as part of the bureau or office directives system." Until the USWFS establishes a directives system, the authority delegated to the USWFS Director in Secretary's Order No. 3448 may only be assigned, not formally delegated or re-delegated, by the USFWS Director to other positions within the USWFS to exercise.

For all USWFS positions with assigned authority, the deputy position for that office holds those assigned authorities when the primary is not available (for example, a Geographic Area Deputy Fire Chief shares all authorities held by Geographic Area Fire Chief).

While the USWFS generally assigns authority to the lowest organizational levels consistent with efficient program management, officials at higher organizational levels can exercise authority that has been reassigned to their subordinates unless expressly prohibited by law.

4. Geographic Area Authority

The Geographic Area (GA) Fire Chiefs are authorized to perform in their respective GA. The GAs are shown on the National Interagency Coordination Center's Geographic Area site at: <https://www.nifc.gov/nicc/geographic-areas>.

5. Assignments, Reassignments and Actings

The attached table serves as written notification of assignment/reassignment by the USWFS Director for the ability to exercise specific authorities within the USWFS. Any official to whom authority is assigned in the table below, or to whom authority has been assigned by other appropriate means, may, in writing, reassign or authorize reassignment of such authority, unless reassignment of authority is specifically prohibited or is limited. The written notice must be signed by the official reassigning the authority and sent to the position receiving the authority. Assignments must be limited by either an end date or an end condition (e.g., "until the wildfire is called out or "until superseded or revoked").

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Employees detailed or temporarily promoted to positions covered in this authority policy will assume the responsibilities and ability to exercise authorities assigned to that position and will sign documents as "Acting."

An individual may be designated as an acting official for a specified period of time if the USWFS position with the assigned authority is unavailable. These designations must be in writing and include the specified time period an individual will serve in an acting capacity. Individuals serving in an acting capacity must use judgment in exercising these authorities. This includes considering the relative importance of an issue, whether the issue could or should be deferred, and the known preference of the individual for whom that person is exercising authority.

Actings may be designated either by individual designation (e.g., Mark Pierce will be acting from January 12 – January 15 or Mark Pierce will be acting from July 3 until further notice.) or by a standard acting rotation (e.g., Joe Smith will be acting for January, Mary Johnson will be acting for February, etc.). These designations should also include any necessary limitations on authorities for an individual serving in an acting capacity.

Only one individual may be designated to exercise authority for a specified period of time, unless a unique situation applies.

Unique Situations

Individuals serving in an exercising authority capacity assume all the authorities of that position unless authorities are withheld. If an authority is withheld, a designated exercising authority official for that authority will be assigned to ensure continuity of operations. An example for the USWFS of a unique situation would be if a local unit had multiple wildfire incidents with incident management teams assigned and needed additional support to serve as the USWFS Agency Administrator, who is assigned the ability to exercise wildfire authorities such as signing a cost share agreement, for each incident. The USWFS Unit Chief could provide a reassignment of authority to a USWFS employee to be the acting USWFS Unit Chief for an individual incident, reassigning only the authorities related to wildfire incidents for a USWFS Agency Administrator, but would withhold the other authorities held by a USWFS Unit Chief.

Reassignment of an authority does not preclude that USWFS official from later revoking that authority from the lower level or requiring concurrence to exercise that authority from a higher-level official. An assignment or reassignment of authority may be revoked at any time by providing written notice to the position(s) involved.

6. Authorities/Actions Table

Authority/Action Column: This column contains specific authorities. All the authorities/actions to which a legal authority is attached are not listed individually but may be summarized in one descriptive statement.

USWFS Officials Columns: These columns indicate the USWFS national, geographic area or unit official authority is assigned to. Authorities may be exercised at the level(s) marked in USWFS Officials Columns. For example, an "X" in the "GA FC/ GA DFC" column indicates that all GA Fire Chiefs and GA Deputy Fire Chiefs hold that authority.

Abbreviations used in columns include:

D/DD - USWFS Director and Deputy Directors

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GA FC/GA DFC – USWFS Geographic Area Fire Chief and Geographic Area Deputy Fire Chief

Unit FC – USWFS Unit Fire Chief

Symbols used in the column and their definition:

An "X" indicates that the authority is assigned to all within that category and may be **reassigned to a lower level by the official designated with that authority.**

An asterisk (*) indicates that the authority **may not be reassigned below the designated official**, except as annotated in an accompanying note (if applicable). Limitations may be in accordance with regulations or may be at the discretion of the higher-level authority.

A number (e.g., "1") indicates either a specific position receiving authority or an explanatory note for that activity.

While the table contains many authorities within the USWFS, it does not contain every single one, nor can it contain assignments made, revoked, or changed following the issuance of the authority policy. Additionally, there may be situations where an authority may be reassigned in writing by an official that is provided such discretion.

Notes: This column provides additional information and clarity regarding which functional position has a given authority and those authorities that may not be reassigned. For example, if the "D/DD" column is checked for an activity in Aviation, the "Notes" column might provide additional clarity that the authority is with the Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management. When "Bureau or Bureaus" is used in the Notes column, it refers to the four land management Bureaus in the Department of Interior (Department or DOI) – (1) Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), (2) Bureau of Land Management (BLM), (3) National Park Service (NPS), and (4) U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS).

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Topic	Authority/Action	USWFS Officials			Notes
		D/DD	GA FC / GA DFC	Unit FC	
Administrative	Serve as the Hiring Official for emergency firefighters in accordance with the Administratively Determined (AD) Pay Plan for Emergency Workers (Casuals) for both wildland fire and all-hazard needs.	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹	1 - This may only be reassigned to an AD Pay Plan for Emergency Workers (Casuals) subject matter expert (SME) at the respective level (e.g., Unit FC may redelegate to the Unit's AD Pay Plan SME). Multiple SMEs within an administrative unit may receive this reassignment.
	Approve advanced written requests for non-wildfire travel for actual per diem or lodging costs up to 300 percent of the allowable per diem or lodging allowance for the locality.	X	*		When a traveler has a resource order for wildfire or all-hazard incident travel, the USWFS has provided prior approval for actual per diem or lodging costs up to 300 percent of the allowable per diem or lodging allowance for the locality; no separate advanced written approval is required.
	Approve requests, in writing, to domicile a government vehicle at an employee's residence in connection with official temporary duty travel.	X	*	*	This approval is not the same as the Home-to-Work approval for fieldwork activities under 41 CFR 102-5, which requires approval by the Secretary of the Interior.
	Approve Administrative leave.	X	*	*	Administrative leave under 5 U.S.C. 6329a and 5 C.F.R. Part 630, Subpart N, O, and P is discretionary and does not constitute an entitlement. Assigned officials may approve administrative leave under their line of authority on an ad hoc, event-specific, or otherwise time-limited basis. Consistent with regulatory intent, administrative leave is to be used sparingly and is generally limited to brief periods.
Agreements	Sign national level agreements to facilitate mutual assistance for wildland fire management activities such as prevention, training, preparedness, fuels management, suppression, and post-fire activities.	X			

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Topic	Authority/Action	USWFS Officials			Notes
		D/DD	GA FC / GA DFC	Unit FC	
Agreements (continued)	Sign Statewide Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreements	X	*		
	Sign local agreements tiered to a Statewide Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management and Stafford Act Response Agreements.	X	*	*	
	Sign fire operating plans committing funds and/or resources in support of national, state and/or local level agreements for mutual assistance.	X	*	*	
	Sign interagency agreements for wildland fire management to include, but not limited to, agreements for: initial response, protection, offset, and dispatch or coordination centers.	X	X	X	Signature on an agreement should be at the level the agreement covers. For example, an agreement at the local level would be signed by the USWFS Unit FC.
	Sign memoranda of understanding (MOUs) related to the wildland fire program.	X	X	*	
	Sign financial assistance agreements related to the wildland fire program.	X	X	*	
	Sign agreements and MOUs that are ONLY for aviation operations and aviation management.	* ¹			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management
	Sign wildfire cost share agreements for multi-jurisdictional wildfires. ‡	X	*	*	
	Sign Tribal 638 agreements.	X ¹			1 - Only Self Determination Officers/Specialists (Awarding Officials for contracts and grants under the Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act (ISDEAA), P.L. 93-638). 638 agreements may vary and each agreement should be referenced for what authorities may be assigned to the Tribe and what is retained by the USWFS.
Aviation	Sign Single-Skid, Toe-In and Hover Exit/Entry Procedures (STEP) plans.	* ¹			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management

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Topic	Authority/Action	USWFS Officials			Notes
		D/DD	GA FC / GA DFC	Unit FC	
Aviation (continued)	Sign Letter of Authorization for Incidental Pilots supporting Interagency Fire.	X ¹			1 - Director and the Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management
	Sign Project Aviation Safety Plans (Crewed and Uncrewed Aircraft Systems (UAS)).	X ^{1,2}	X ²	*2	1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management 2 - Aviation programs not unified under the WFS will retain their current delegated authorities and approval levels.
	Sign Aviation Security Risk Assessments and Plans.	X ^{1,2}			1- Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management 2 - Aviation programs not unified under the WFS will retain their current delegated authorities and approval levels.
	Sign Aviation Plans.	X ^{1,2}	*2	*2	Plans are approved by USWFS officials at the level of coverage or a higher level, e.g., a Geographic Area Plan will be approved by the GA FC/GA DFC or approved at the national level. 1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management 2 - Aviation programs not unified under the WFS will retain their current delegated authorities and approval levels.
	Approve Senior Executive Service (SES) official travel (non-mission) or carriage of non-federal personnel using government owned, leased, contracted or cooperator aircraft.	*1			1 - Director only
	Approve DOI employee official travel (non-mission) using government owned, leased, contracted or cooperator aircraft.	X	*		
	Approve the carriage of non-aircrew members on mission flights.	*1			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management
	Approve exception to seat fare requirements.	*1			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management

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Topic	Authority/Action	USWFS Officials			Notes
		D/DD	GA FC / GA DFC	Unit FC	
Aviation (continued)	Sign Short-haul plans.	* ¹			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management
	Sign Rappel Plans.	* ¹			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management
	Sign Hoist Plans.	* ¹			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management
	Sign Aerial Capture, Eradication and Tagging of Animals (ACETA) Plans.	* ¹			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management
	Sign Cooperator Letters (Crewed and UAS).	X ¹			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management
	Approve Aviation Life Support Equipment Waiver.	X ¹			1 - Director and Deputy Director of Aviation Operations and Management
Fuels and Post-Fire	Sign prescribed fire plans. †	X ¹	* ¹	* ¹	1 - Both the USWFS and Bureaus approve prescribed fire plans.
	Sign Ignition Authorization.	X	X	*	A National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG) qualified burn boss will sign the Go/No-Go Checklist.
	Sign submitted post-fire plans from Bureaus that are utilizing USWFS funds.	X	X		
	Approve prescribed fire implementation on DOI lands, including contracted or non-fuels management prescribed fire projects, at National or Geographic Preparedness Level (PL) 4 or 5.	X	* ¹		1 - GA FC/GA DFC approves at National or Geographic PL 4 or 5.
Response and Suppression	Provide wildfire protection for all BIA, BLM, NPS and FWS lands.	X	X	X	
	Order suppression resources and expend funds for wildfire management. †	X ¹	X ¹	X ¹	1 - May only be reassigned to a qualified Incident Commander (IC) or to a fire operational duty officer (DO). If this authority is reassigned to an IC and a Leader's Intent is also being provided to that IC, the same USWFS Official will sign both documents. Note: Bureaus may also sign the Leader's Intent.

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Topic	Authority/Action	USWFS Officials			Notes
		D/DD	GA FC / GA DFC	Unit FC	
Response and Suppression (continued)	Approve wildfire decisions in the Wildland Fire Decision Support System (WFDSS). ‡	X ¹	* ¹	* ¹	1 - Both the USWFS and Bureaus approve wildfire decisions in WFDSS.
	Certify/Approve fire reports.	X	X	*	
	Make decisions as part of a Multi-Agency Coordinating (MAC) Group as they affect DOI lands to establish fire priorities, allocate and re-allocate fire suppression resources.	X ¹	X ²	X ³	1 - Member of National MAC Group 2 - Member of Geographic Area MAC Group 3 - Member of Local MAC Group
Training and Qualifications	Certify wildland fire Position Task Books (PTBs) of all DOI employees, including USWFS and Bureau personnel. Certify Incident Qualification Cards for all employees in the DOI, including the Bureaus and the USWFS, who have BOTH wildland fire and all-hazard qualifications. Certify all-hazard PTBs for USWFS employees.	X	* ^{1,2}	* ^{1,2}	1 - The GA FC/GA DFC will certify position task books and incident qualifications cards for Unit FCs. The Director/Deputy Director will certify position task books and incident qualifications cards for GA FC. 2 - Exceptions: The GA FC/GA DFC will certify position task books of all DOI employees, including USWFS and Bureau employees, within the GA for wildland fire area command positions and complex command & general staff positions.

‡ - Due to the unique responsibilities required by the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, as amended 43 U.S.C. 1620(e) (ANCSA), the Alaska GA FC/GA DFC may exercise this authority, in coordination with Native Corporations, for wildfires and prescribed fires that involve lands that require protection under ANCSA.