



United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

January 26, 2021

OWF POLICY MEMORANDUM 2021-002

To: Director, Bureau of Land Management
Director, National Park Service
Director, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service
Director, Bureau of Indian Affairs
Commissioner, Bureau of Reclamation
Director, U.S. Geological Survey

From: Jeff Rupert, Director – Office of Wildland Fire **JEFFERY RUPERT** Digitally signed by JEFFERY RUPERT
Date: 2021.01.26 10:59:37 -05'00'

Subject: Final Guidance for Fiscal Year 2021 Funds Execution and Wildland Fire Management Budget Allocations

Purpose: This memorandum provides direction regarding the DOI Wildland Fire Management (WFM) budget allocations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2021, based on Public Law (P.L.) 116-260, *The FY2021 Omnibus and COVID Relief and Response Act*, which was signed into law on December 27, 2020. The Act authorizes appropriations for the Department of the Interior (DOI) through September 30, 2021.

Scope: This memorandum outlines budget allocation amounts for WFM funded programs and activities for the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS), the National Park Service (NPS), the Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) and the Department-wide activities. This memorandum supplements previously issued FY 2020 budget guidance in OWF Policy Memoranda 2021-001.

Time Frame: P.L. 116-260 covers FY 2021 from October 1, 2020 to September 30, 2021. This Policy Memorandum is effective immediately and remains in effect until rescinded or modified.

Policy: Bureau allocation amounts for the FY are provided in Attachment 1. Bureaus will be notified of Treasury transaction numbers once the transfers are completed.

In addition, the following budget guidance and direction applies:

DOI'S PLAN TO TRANSFORM THE FIREFIGHTING WORKFORCE

The FY 2021 President's Budget proposed \$28 million in Preparedness and \$22 million in Fuels Management for a total of \$50 million in DOI's Plan to Transform the Firefighting Workforce – a priority investment to increase the capacity of permanent firefighters for a year-round Federal

workforce to meet the demands of longer, larger, costlier, and more complex wildfires and advance active vegetation management.

P.L. 116-260 provides a total of \$29 million to implement this priority initiative, with \$7 million funded by Preparedness and \$22 million funded by Fuels Management. Bureaus are requested to adjust and update their workforce implementation plan, based on the respective allocation amounts identified for this initiative in Attachment 1. Given the significant increase in funding for this initiative, DOI should expect considerable congressional and independent agency and office interest in the bureaus' progress in implementing the workforce plan.

In order to facilitate Human Resource support to accomplish bureau workforce implementation plans in a timely manner, bureaus are requested to start identifying the occupational series, grades, and locations of the impacted positions. Specific reporting requirements will be forthcoming.

PREPAREDNESS

Preparedness Funding Increase: P.L. 116-260 provides \$14.3 million in Preparedness funding above the FY 2020 enacted level. Of this amount, \$7.3 million is designated for fixed costs and distributed to each bureau proportionally based on their share of the total Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs) reported.

The remaining increase of \$7.0 million is designated to DOI's Plan to Transform the Firefighting Workforce, described above. Because P.L. 116-260 only provides \$7 million of the requested \$28 million, or 25%, bureau allocations reflect the same proportion of funding per bureau as proposed in the original workforce implementation plan.

Preparedness Spend Plan: In order to increase consistency and transparency of all WFM program funding, bureaus are requested to provide a comprehensive spend plan for all Preparedness funding. This spend plan should align with and capture changes associated with the workforce implementation plan. Spend plan template and guidance is forthcoming.

SUPPRESSION

Suppression Operations: The Suppression Operations funding allocations represent approximately 40 percent of the enacted level of funding. The basis for the allocation is the percent share each bureau has of the ten-year rolling average. The remaining 60 percent is held in the Parent Account. As in previous years, the remaining Suppression funding will be allocated based on seasonal activity. Bureaus should identify and request additional allocations, as the need arises.

Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund: In addition to the enacted level of funding for Suppression Operations, P.L. 116-260 provides \$310 million in additional budget authority, to remain available until transferred, in the Wildfire Suppression Operations Reserve Fund. OWF will work with the bureaus to monitor Suppression obligations continuously through the end of the FY in order to anticipate and inform transfer plans, as needed. OWF is coordinating with

DOI's Office of Budget, the Department of Treasury and the Office of Management and Budget to facilitate the process for any necessary transfers in FY 2021. In order to provide for transparency and documentation of funding transferred from the cap adjustment, this funding will continue to be tracked through a separate functional area than the WFM program Suppression Operations functional area.

Emergency Stabilization (ES) and Severity: ES and Severity authority levels are capped at ten percent of the ten-year rolling suppression expenditure average for DOI.

The distribution of ES authority is based on the rolling ten-year average percentage of acres burned by bureau nationally, excluding Alaska. The percentages for FY 2021 are: BIA, 19.58%; BLM, 64.08%; FWS, 8.18%; and NPS, 8.16%.

Severity authority is capped at \$32 million with the balance held in reserve. The distribution of Severity authority is based on each bureau's base percentage split of the annual Preparedness Appropriation. The percentages are: BIA, 18.48%; BLM, 57.24%; FWS, 10.78%; and NPS, 13.50%.

FY 2021 Funding Authority levels (\$000) are shown below:

Bureau	BIA	BLM	FWS	NPS	Reserve	Total
Emergency Stabilization (ES) (Based on Percentages)	\$8,395	\$27,473	\$3,507	\$3,499		\$42,874
Severity	\$5,913	\$18,317	\$3,450	\$4,320	\$10,874	\$42,874

Obligations, regardless of where the funding comes from, count against the funding authority caps; recoveries do not increase the amount of obligation authority available in a given year. In the event one or more bureau anticipates that it will exceed its ES or Severity authority, OWF, in collaboration with the bureau Fire Directors, will coordinate and approve the redistribution of ES and/or Severity authority between bureaus, as warranted. Any recommended increases to the ES or Severity caps are subject to approval by the Director of OWF in collaboration with the bureau Fire Directors.

FUELS MANAGEMENT

Fuels Management Funding Increases: P.L. 116-260 provides \$26.0 million in Fuels Management funding above the FY 2020 enacted level. Of this amount, \$3.0 million is designated for fixed costs and distributed to each bureau proportionally based on their share of the total FTEs reported.

The remaining increase of \$23.0 million is designated to DOI's Plan to Transform the Firefighting Workforce (\$22.0 million) and base project work (\$1.0 million). Funding is fully allocated to each bureau as proposed in the original workforce implementation plan.

Bureaus should ensure adequate funding for staff and necessary program activities and leverage opportunities to utilize their allocations to actively implement fuels treatments. Internal management controls for hiring of personnel should be followed. Bureaus are encouraged to request cross-bureau coordination assistance from OWF if their servicing human resources office may not be able to meet hiring demand and timelines.

Special Initiative Projects: Funding in the amount of \$14.5 million is reserved in the Parent account. Bureaus are expected to continue and finalize project implementation for previously approved multi-year projects.

Fuels Management Spend Plan Updates:

Consistent with direction under the broader fuels program, all projects should follow program guidance described in OWF Policy Memorandum 2020-004 (*Fuels Management Program Priorities and Reporting Requirements*), including submission of updated spend plans that reflect the highest priority projects as well as related workforce plans consistent with the allocation amounts identified in Attachment 1.

FY 2021 Fuels Management spend plans are due to OWF by February 23, 2021.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR): Bureaus are expected to fund the highest priority projects identified in their FY 2021 Spend Plans. All projects must be entered into the National Fire Plan Operations Reporting System (NFPORS). Please include only those projects that are approved by leadership.

Final FY 2021 BAR spend plans are due to OWF by February 23, 2021.

Facilities: Facilities is funded at \$18.4 million. The project level descriptions can be found in the “Wildland Fire Five Year Construction/Deferred Maintenance Plan Summary,” as coordinated through the DOI Wildland Fire Facility Group and approved by the bureau Fire Directors on January 13, 2021. The \$18.4 million in enacted funding will fully fund 10 projects; in addition, \$386,000 is allocated for Architectural and Engineering Design. Given increased oversight of high carryover balances in recent years, OWF will coordinate a quarterly status review of Facilities plans.

Joint Fire Science Program: For the Joint Fire Science program, the full-year funding level of \$3 million is allocated.

Carryover: OWF strongly encourages bureaus to obligate prior year funding, including carryover and recoveries, with priority focus on funds from FY 2018 and older. Bureaus are approved to execute carryover funds in FY 2021 in accordance with the carryover spend plans submitted to OWF at the beginning of the year. Bureaus should target obligations of prior year funding by the second quarter of FY 2021 and provide comprehensive carryover plans that describe any challenges in achieving the 2% carryover rate by fiscal year-end. Guidance on mid-year review is forthcoming.

CARES Act Funding: Please be reminded that all funding authorized through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, as documented in OWF Policy Memorandum 2020-007 (*Guidance on Execution of Supplemental Funding Under COVID-19 Pandemic*) expire on September 30, 2021. Bureaus should continually monitor and assess the progress of obligations and coordinate with OWF to request repurposing or returning funding to the Office of the Secretary as appropriate.

Contacts: All questions regarding this Policy Memorandum can be directed to Thao Tran, Budget Officer, Office of Wildland Fire at (202) 606-0518, or Craig Leff, Deputy Director, Office of Wildland Fire, at (202) 606-3053.

cc: Interior Fire Executives
Interior Fire Directors

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – FY 2021 WFM Bureau Allocation