




United States Department of the Interior

OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY
Washington, DC 20240

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OWF POLICY MEMORANDUM 2018-002

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: Bryan Rice, Director – Office of Wildland Fire 

Subject: Preliminary Guidance for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018 Funds Execution and Wildland Fire Budget Allocations under Continuing Resolution

Purpose: This memorandum provides direction regarding the DOI Wildland Fire Management budget allocations for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018, based on Public Law (P.L.) 115-56: the Continuing Appropriations Act, 2018 and Supplemental Appropriations for Disaster Relief Requirements Act, 2017. The Act authorizes continuing appropriations for FY 2018 through December 8, 2017, and provides funding at the daily rate of the FY 2017 funding level less an across-the-board reduction of 0.6791 percent.

Scope: This memo outlines budget allocation amounts under the Continuing Resolution (CR) for fire management funded programs and activities in 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 fire activities. Final guidance will be issued when a full year appropriation is enacted.

Time Frame: P.L. 115-56 covers FY 2018 from October 1, 2017 to December 8, 2017. This is a period covering 69 days, which is 18.90 percent of the FY. This Policy Memorandum is effective immediately and remains in effect until rescinded or modified.

Policy: Bureaus must follow the CR terms and provisions outlined in the Departmental memo provided as Attachment 1.

Bureaus must manage funding consistent with FY 2017 enacted appropriations and may not assume enactment of the FY 2018 request, or pending House and Senate FY 2018 marks. Funds must be managed prudently to maintain ongoing activities in a manner which does not “impinge on final funding prerogatives.” Bureaus are advised to avoid making “one-time” payments in full during the first quarter. If you have a payment which cannot be delayed, please let OWF know as soon as possible.

In addition to the across-the-board reduction, there may be additional sequestration of funding during FY 2018. The amount of a 2018 sequestration of discretionary funding will not be known until January 2018. Bureaus should execute the amount provided in the CR allocations but keep in mind the possibility of additional sequester reductions after January. No funds have been held in the "Parent" account to cover potential sequester of funds.

Available budget authority under a CR is limited to carryover funding plus new budget authority for the specified portion of the year. Bureau allocation amounts for the CR are outlined below in Table 1. This includes CR allocation amounts based on the FY 2017 funding levels, minus the across-the-board reduction and an adjustment to the Facilities activity.

Table 1: Wildland Fire Management FY 2018 CR Allocation

Funding shown in thousands (\$000)

	BIA	BLM	FWS	NPS	OWF	Parent	Total CR Funding
Preparedness	\$12,474	\$35,592	\$5,337	\$7,340	\$1,588	\$138	\$62,469
Suppression	\$16,765	\$43,784	\$4,093	\$9,506	\$0	\$0	\$74,148
Fuels Management	\$8,089	\$16,507	\$3,944	\$4,534	\$621	\$93	\$33,788
Fuels Management - Facilities Allocation	\$450	\$600	\$0	\$250	\$0	\$282	\$1,582
Burned Area Rehabilitation	\$853	\$2,374	\$328	\$288	\$0	\$0	\$3,843
Joint Fire Science Program	\$0	\$1,124	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$1,124
TOTAL Bureau Allocation	\$38,631	\$99,981	\$13,702	\$21,918	\$2,209	\$513	\$176,954

Transfers of funds for these allocations are in progress; OWF will notify bureaus of the Treasury transaction numbers once completed.

In addition to funding levels provided in Table 1, the following budget guidance and direction applies:

Risk-Based Wildland Fire Management (RBWFM): Under the CR, bureau allocations for Preparedness and Fuels Management are calculated using the FY 2017 direct base funding percentages in the Deputy Secretary's memo *Revision to October 20, 2016 memorandum: Risk-Based Wildland Fire Funding Allocation – 2017-2019 Preparedness and Fuels Management Accounts*, dated October 25, 2016.

Preparedness: Within the Preparedness Program, \$62.5 million is allocated under the CR.

Fuels Management: Within the Fuels Management Program, \$35.4 million is allocated under the CR. This includes funding for Reserved Treaty Rights Lands (RTRL) and \$1.6 million of Facilities funding that is redirected to fund Fuels Management activities that require timely implementation in order to reduce wildfire risk and meet resource management objectives. This policy supports the Wildland Fire Directive memorandum on fuels management issued by Secretary Zinke on September 12, 2017.

Under a CR, bureaus are reminded that Fuels Management activities undertaken within the Wildland Fire Management account are ongoing and are not prohibited by the Sec. 104 provision language. Bureaus should take full advantage of opportunities to implement fuels treatments during the period of the CR, but should exercise prudence to ensure adequate funding for staff and other program activities throughout the year. Internal management controls for hiring of personnel should be followed.

Resilient Landscapes: Wildland Fire Resilient Landscapes (WFRL) activities are funded through the Fuels Management program, and this activity is proposed to be fully eliminated in the FY 2018 President's Budget. The CR funding level for Fuels Management does not provide designated funding with new budget authority for WFRL, and no new projects or activities should be initiated. OWF will provide further guidance on the distribution of unobligated or unexpended prior year funding for work on existing collaborative projects. In accordance with OWF Policy Memorandum 2017-006, Collaborative Leads are required to complete their FY 2017 annual reporting requirements. Information from the Annual Report will be used to evaluate the success of the WFRL activity and inform future funding decisions.

Suppression Operations: In accordance with policy, approximately 40 percent of the annual Suppression Operations funding are typically allocated to the bureaus, with the remaining 60 percent held in the Parent account to be allocated based on seasonal activity. Because the CR funding level provides amounts below the 40 percent target allocation that bureaus would receive as part of the full-year allocation, all Suppression funding under the CR will be allocated. The basis for allocation is the percent share each bureau has of the ten-year rolling average.

Please be advised that transfer of FLAME funding is not available under the CR. If high fire activity requires more funding than is available in your bureau's allocation of Suppression, please speak with OWF immediately in order for adjustments to be made.

Burned Area Rehabilitation (BAR): BAR allocation for CR funding is based on historical acres burned outside of Alaska. Each bureau is expected to prioritize and allocate BAR project funding using their own bureau-specific criteria, in accordance with Chapter 7, Post-Wildfire Recovery, in Departmental Manual 620.

Facilities: No funding is allocated for Facilities under the CR. Funding for Facilities based on the CR level does not provide sufficient flexibility for individual bureaus to initiate or complete any planned work. Additionally, this activity is proposed to be fully eliminated in the FY 2018 President's Budget and in accordance with Departmental guidance, Sec. 109 provides that "Bureaus and offices may not obligate funds under the CR that would impinge on the funding prerogatives of Congress, including funding for specific projects such as land acquisition, construction and grants." Funding from other activities cannot be used to fund Facilities projects.

Funding provided for Facilities purpose is redirected for allocation under Fuels Management. Consistent with the guidance in Attachment 1, funding under the CR is provided at the account level, and bureaus and offices have the flexibility to manage cash flow within the account by prioritizing obligations as appropriate.

Department-wide Activities: The across-the-board reductions have been applied to each of the Department-wide Activities. Carryover funding available from FY 2017 will be reviewed and individual project budgets will be adjusted accordingly prior to the next allocation.

Carryover: In accordance with OWF Policy Memorandum 2017-009, starting in FY 2018, bureaus are required to spend down to 2% or lower carryover rate for most WFM accounts, with the exception of Suppression and Facilities. OWF understands that operating plans may be impacted due to the budget environment under a CR and encourages all bureaus to provide comprehensive carryover plans that will describe any ongoing challenges in achieving this carryover rate. Please note that carryover spend plans in FY 2018 are due October 16, 2017, and quarterly reviews are due January 16, 2018; April 16, 2018; and July 16, 2018.

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.

Attachments:

- Attachment 1 – Departmental Memo for CR Guidance through December 8, 2017

cc: Interior Fire Executives
Interior Fire Directors

