

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

between:

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Office of Wildland Fire and the
Intertribal Timber Council**

concerning:

Wildland Fire Management

This Memorandum of Understanding between the Department of the Interior (DOI) Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) and the Intertribal Timber Council (ITC) recognizes the mutual interest that both organizations share in reducing wildfire risk on DOI and tribal lands and acknowledges the importance of communicating and collaborating on wildland fire management (WFM) related issues relevant to and in support of common goals and objectives.

I. Introduction

The OWF is the principal organization responsible for developing Department-wide WFM policy, ensuring program accountability and providing oversight of the WFM budget. Through collaborative work with many partners, DOI strives to increase resilience to the effects of climate change, reduce fuel loads across landscapes, develop and promote fire-adapted communities and improve wildfire response. In meeting these objectives, DOI manages an integrated organizational model whereby program execution is carried out by four bureaus with WFM responsibilities—the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, National Park Service and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service—and guided in part by a common policy and programmatic approach that is established by OWF.

The ITC is the primary intertribal organization that supports the common goals of the majority of Indian Tribes with significant forested landscapes. It is a consortium of Indian Tribes, Alaska Native Corporations, and individuals dedicated to improving the management of forested-tribal lands and other natural resources of importance to tribal communities. ITC accomplishes its goals through cooperation, collaboration and shared information among its members and other non-tribal partners, including the federal government.

Mindful of these roles and responsibilities, both organizations acknowledge that:

- 1) The historical recognition and future preservation of the tribal connection to the landscape requires close communication and collaboration on WFM issues.
- 2) The proximity and interconnectedness of DOI-administered lands with tribal lands and resources benefits from close communication and collaboration on WFM issues.
- 3) Wildfires are becoming larger, costlier and more complex to manage as the result of climate change, persistent drought, and other factors.
- 4) OWF and ITC share common WFM program goals and objectives, including reducing wildfire risk and mitigating post-wildfire impacts.
- 5) Preventing and effectively managing wildfires is vitally important to protecting tribal communities, economies and traditional uses of lands and resources.
- 6) Communication and collaboration are key to strengthening the beneficial impacts of our mutual investments.

- 7) DOI has a duty to honor and fulfill the United States Government's tribal trust responsibility.

II. Scope and Duration

The effective date of this document will commence upon the date of the final signature, and will remain in effect for five years, or as otherwise agreed and modified. Any party may initiate a modification to this document to incorporate any changes that are mutually agreed to by the signatories.

III. Mutual Interests and Benefits

The principles of effective wildland fire management are grounded in the values of cooperation and collaboration. In fulfilling its statutory commitments to protect people, communities, and resources from the risks of wildfire, and restoring public and tribal lands affected by wildfires, DOI assumes a collaborative approach to wildland fire management. DOI is also committed to sound conservation principles to address the effect of climate change on wildland fire activity and promote landscape resilience. Similarly, in advocating for the tribal stewardship of natural resources, the ITC has an interest in working closely with an array of partners to influence the management of tribal lands in support of thriving tribal communities. Through this partnership, DOI can collaborate to build wildland fire management capacity and enhance resources needed in tribal communities. These practices are key to advancing equity and providing much needed support for underserved communities.

OWF and ITC can mutually benefit by working together to actively identify common goals through a cooperative and collaborative relationship. This is underscored by the proximity and intersection of tribal and DOI-administered lands across the landscape. It is therefore beneficial for both organizations to work together to address the following common federal and tribal WFM challenges on the landscape:

- 1) Promote fire-adapted communities, resilient landscapes and rangelands and enhance safe and effective wildfire response.
- 2) Recognize and promote the role of and value of indigenous burning.
- 3) Promote the use of prescribed burning to meet resilient landscape and indigenous burning goals.
- 4) Support the restoration and maintenance of lands affected by unwanted wildfires through long-term rehabilitation.
- 5) Facilitate greater economic vitality of local communities and traditional uses of lands.
- 6) Strengthen workforces through outreach, recruitment, training and employment.
- 7) Improve awareness and understanding of objectives, concerns, opportunities and constraints with regard to contemporaneous WFM issues.
- 8) Fulfill federal tribal trust responsibilities.

IV. Purpose

Based on the foregoing, the purpose of this Memorandum of Understanding is to describe a relational framework whereby OWF and ITC agree to undertake mutually beneficial actions to

address current and future WFM challenges. In doing so, both organizations recognize and agree to proactively communicate early and often in order to provide opportunities for engagement on issues potentially affecting tribes or tribal values. In support of each organization's missions, OWF and ITC agree to work collaboratively to:

- 1) Identify shared values to better inform wildfire risk through the Shared Wildfire Risk Mitigation framework.
- 2) Utilize wildland fire information technology to inform and make better decisions and facilitate communications among partners and across jurisdictions, as appropriate.
- 3) Highlight common conservation priorities which could aid in addressing the effects of climate change and its impact on wildland fire activity.
- 4) Develop joint communications products, including reports, analyses, papers and other informational products, to inform internal and external audiences about issues and shared goals and objectives.
- 5) Discuss best management practices, skills, methods and innovations to better inform and support federal WFM policies and programs and improve the management of tribal-forested lands.
- 6) Coordinate on workforce, outreach and recruitment efforts and seek job creation opportunities to support robust federal and tribal wildland fire management organizations.
- 7) Facilitate the exchange of perspectives and information to increase awareness, understanding and engagement between the two organizations.

V. Contacts

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VI. Signatures

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Rachael S. Taylor
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary -
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US Department of the Interior

Date: _____



Cody Desautel
President
Intertribal Timber Council

Date: 06/15/2021