

ORDER TO FURTHER STRENGTHEN FEDERAL WILDLAND FIREFIGHTING
CAPABILITIES AND IMPROVE FOREST MANAGEMENT

July 1, 2025

By the authority vested in me as President by the Constitution and the laws of the United States of America, it is hereby ordered:

Section 1. Background. The federal government owns and manages over 238 million acres of forestland. Federal agencies, including the U.S. Forest Service and the National Park Service, have managed fires in federal forests for over 100 years. Over the past 20 years, however, wildfires have grown in size, duration, and destructivity because of increasing fuels accumulating in the forests and increasing periods of extreme drought coupled with extreme rain in the American West. To protect people, property, and our natural resources from these compounding risks, a new approach is needed.

The commitment and professionalism of our federal firefighting personnel is beyond question. But the investments in wildland firefighting capabilities and forest management practices on federally managed lands, particularly over the last decade, have been inadequate to provide them the tools they need to prevent and combat catastrophic wildfires originating on or burning through federally managed lands as weather patterns become more erratic and extreme and extended hot, dry and windy conditions become more frequent. Indeed, from 2017-2020, over 21 million acres of federal lands burned. The federal government should lead, and at a minimum match states and local governments, in making investments and implementing policies to protect communities from the threats posed by wildland fires originating on or burning through federally managed lands.

Yet the federal government is not meeting this call. The salaries for federal firefighting personnel are not competitive, and, as a result, the U.S. Forest Service is significantly understaffed to respond to the breadth of risk and fire starts that impact lands they manage each year. Investments in forestry management, recently further reduced by efficiency measures, have also been inadequate to address the risks of wildfires on federal forestlands.

In contrast, California, as one example, has significantly enhanced both its wildland firefighting capabilities – including personnel, equipment, and technology – and its investments in forest management and treatment to reduce the risks of catastrophic fires on lands under its management responsibility. Notably, over the last six years, California has built the largest aerial firefighting fleet in the world, including helicopters with night-time firefighting capabilities, and retrofitted C-130H airtankers acquired from the U.S. Coast Guard as a result of bipartisan efforts in Congress. What's more, California has deployed cutting-edge artificial intelligence, mapping and modeling tools to predict fire risk and fire spread, to detect fire starts early, and to support firefighting efforts. California also has increased firefighter pay and nearly doubled the number of state firefighting personnel. Finally, California has dramatically expanded forest treatment and fire prevention efforts, with billions of dollars directed to these efforts. California has provided over \$4 billion for wildfire protection and forest resilience in 2024-25, compared to just over \$7 billion appropriated for fiscal year 2024 to manage wildfires on all 238 million acres of federal lands nationwide.

Sec. 2. Policy. It is the policy of the United States to have capabilities at least equal to, and make investments at least proportionally equal to, the most advanced states and local governments with respect to forest management and firefighting capabilities. These capabilities should include, but not necessarily be limited to, robust staffing, including competitive pay for firefighting and support personnel, to meet the need in the face of increasing fire risks; equipment, including aerial assets, sufficient to swiftly respond to fires; cutting edge technology to predict risks and to effectively attack and contain fires when they ignite or burn on federal lands; and programs for vegetation management, prescribed burning, and other treatments.

Sec. 3. Implementation. Within 60 days of this order, the Office of Management and Budget shall present a proposed budget augmentation, for all relevant federal agencies with firefighting and fire prevention responsibilities on federal lands, necessary to meet the policy identified in Section 2 of this order, including, but not necessarily limited to, increased pay for firefighting personnel, improved staffing, investments to modernize aerial firefighting assets, utilization of technology to prevent, predict, and attack wildland fires, improving approaches to fuels treatments, and any recommended policy changes necessary to effectively utilize the increased funding. The proposal shall also include the restoration of recent staffing and funding reductions that have impeded the federal government's ability to adequately prepare for and respond to wildfire threats.

Sec. 4. General Provisions. (a) Nothing in this order shall be construed to impair or otherwise affect:

(i) the authority granted by law to an executive department or agency, or the head thereof; or (ii) the functions of the Director of the Office of Management and Budget relating to budgetary, administrative, or legislative proposals.

(b) This order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law and subject to the availability of appropriations.

(c) This order is not intended to, and does not, create any right or benefit, substantive or procedural, enforceable at law or in equity by any party against the United States, its departments, agencies, or entities, its officers, employees, or agents, or any other person.

THE WHITE HOUSE,

July 1, 2025.