



# NATIONAL WILDFIRE INSTITUTE

Supporting Healthy Forests That Resist Catastrophic Fire

July 29, 2021

To: Jaelith Hall-Rivera, Acting Deputy Chief, State and Private Forestry [[Jaelith.Hall-rivera@usda.gov](mailto:Jaelith.Hall-rivera@usda.gov)],

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We are honored to reach out to you.

The National Wildfire Institute recently sent Chief Randy Moore a letter expressing our concerns about the current situation with increased wildland fires and the associated lack of forest maintenance.

Chief Moore reported for duty on July 26, 2021 and took the oath of office from USDA Secretary Vilsack. Chief Moore then issued his opening remarks. In his first speech as Forest Service Chief, he said, "...My intention is to increase on-the-ground efforts and focus because we know that if we're going to make a difference, we're going to make a difference at that ground level. And so, I invite you all to stay engaged."

In your efforts to address what has already become a devastating fire year, please keep in mind the fire weather and fuels conditions throughout the west, and indeed the rest of the country. The Energy Release Components – ERC -- are as high as ever recorded, for most weather stations since the first of April.

Accordingly, please do all you can to ensure that all fires, especially in the western states, receive an aggressive initial and extended attack response with the intent of putting all fires out immediately. This needs to be done before communities are placed at risk due to the autonomy granted to Regional Foresters and Forest Supervisors to "Use Fire for Resource Benefit". There are far too many months left in this extreme fire year to do anything less. **Simply put:** put all fires out immediately; no exceptions.

Following are three primary suggestions that you and Chief Moore should consider.

**SUPPRESSION ACTIONS THAT NEED TO BE INCLUDED IN THE DIRECTION TO REGIONAL FORESTERS:**

1. The use of “managed wildfire for resource benefit” is suspended until further notice.
2. All wildfires, including those in Wilderness Areas, will receive an immediate aggressive air and ground initial -- and extended attack if required – that is designed to contain and control all fires as soon as possible with minimal burned acreage.
3. Wherever safe to do so, a direct attack strategy shall be used in place of an indirect one.
4. Large burnouts shall be avoided.
5. Big Box strategies shall be avoided.
6. Aerial firefighting resources, including smokejumpers, shall be fully utilized.
7. The recommended actions should be sent to all line officers, fire staff and IC’s.

**MAINTAINING RELATIONSHIPS WITH COOPERATORS IN THE SUPPRESSION EFFORTS WILL BE ESSENTIAL CONSIDERING:**

1. The "militia" shall be pressed into service wherever needed to assist in the overall effort to prevent, detect, and suppress all wildfires.
2. Close working relationships with cooperators and stakeholders are essential and must be fully maintained. A key to cooperation is dispatch plans and protocols that shall include “use of closest resources” regardless of agency and direct protection responsibilities.
3. Special attention and support must be given to rural communities through Firesafe Councils and other local groups as this may be the best use of funds and human resources to immediately save lives and property.

**THE DIRECTIONS TO REGIONAL FORESTERS SHOULD PROVIDE A COMPONENT ON PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO REDUCE THE THREATS OF HUMAN IGNITION AND PREVENTION INCLUDING:**

1. Programs designed to reduce human-caused ignitions shall be enhanced.
2. Forest closures and restrictions shall be fully utilized during periods of increased fire danger.
3. All available fire detection systems shall be fully utilized.

We stand ready to work with you to help achieve our overall goal of providing for the safety of the public; firefighters; and the protection and maintenance of our valuable landscapes across America.

Sincerely,

Bruce Courtright  
Board Chairman  
National Wildfire Institute

cc:

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