



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20240

Memorandum

To: Regional Directors

From: Director

Subject: Leader's Intent: Wildland Fire 2024

Our mission is to protect lives, property, and the natural and cultural resources we value so deeply. Wildland fire occurs year-round; we have already experienced activity and significant events in several parks this year. As we move forward, we must prioritize and reflect on several key areas.

The safety of our personnel is paramount. Every decision we make, every action we take, must be rooted in the principle of keeping the team and the public safe. Wildland fire management comes with inherent risk. Remember: human life and wellbeing is more important than any fire line or containment objective. If conditions become too hazardous, we will reassess and adapt our strategies accordingly. We need to consider risk trade-offs as we evaluate our course of action, consider the immediate and longer-term consequences, and be mindful of risk transference.

Developing our workforce enhances safety and delivery of the mission. As our greatest asset, we are committed to investing in the training, equipping, and overall well-being of our people. Continuous learning and professional development are crucial. Take advantage of training opportunities, share knowledge, and support one another.

We are stronger and more effective when we embrace diversity and foster an inclusive environment. Every team member, regardless of their background, brings unique perspectives and skills that are invaluable to our mission. Building an inclusive and supportive climate is the responsibility of every leader. The NPS Wildland Fire Program is committed to ensuring that everyone feels respected, valued, and supported. By promoting a culture of inclusion, we enhance our teamwork, innovation, and overall effectiveness. This year, I encourage you to participate in the "Do What's Right" training, a course that will be required in 2025.

A strong, resilient team is one where health is prioritized. Being physically prepared for the strenuous work and long hours helps us cope with the tasks. Physical training, nutrition, and

adequate recovery work together. Work demands can take a toll on mental health. We must be vigilant in supporting each other's mental and emotional well-being. Resources for mental health support are available, and I encourage you to use them. Look out for one another, and do not hesitate to speak up if you or someone you know is struggling. Please consider all the pieces for total health; they are all connected. Taking the time to take care of ourselves allows us to achieve peak performance, longevity, and ultimately mission delivery.

Integrity and ethical conduct must guide our actions. We will always strive to do what is right, even when it is difficult. This includes transparent communication with the public, respectful interactions with our communities, and responsible stewardship of the lands we protect. Upholding our values in every situation builds trust and ensures the long-term success of our mission.

This season, we continue to carry the memory of Dan Holmes, an Arrowhead Hotshot crewmember who was fatally injured when struck by a falling, burning treetop. Dan brought a passion to work and the fire community. Dan's accident is a stark reminder of the inherent dangers and helped to advance risk mitigation with hazardous trees. We also remember the 14 wildland firefighters who tragically lost their lives in the line of duty fighting the South Canyon Fire of 1994. This incident also pushed the wildland fire community to make substantial changes and influenced many efforts that continue today. The sacrifices of these individuals and others are not forgotten. In their honor, we must recommit ourselves to the principles of safety, vigilance, and teamwork. Let their legacy remind us of the seriousness of our work and the importance of looking out for each other.

Fire is a natural and necessary part of many ecosystems. We will use prescribed fire and manage wildfires strategically to reduce risk or negative impacts. Each fire management decision will be made with careful consideration of both immediate and long-term impacts. The NPS Wildland Fire Management program takes a national approach and supports all our parks and interagency partners across boundaries. Fire management plans need to be current, compliance work completed, and response modules staffed appropriately. We will continue to focus on fully staffing our wildland fire and support teams; these are critical as we strive to attract and retain employees for fuels management, fire response, and post-fire mitigation.

Wildland fire faces unknown and unpredictable challenges. It is essential that we remain strategic and adaptable in our approach. NPS wildland fire management has deep roots in applying science and bold strategy. Be prepared to think critically, adjust tactics as needed, and respond flexibly to emerging situations. Your ability to adapt and overcome unforeseen issues will be crucial to our success. We will not only focus on immediate fire suppression but also consider the broader outcomes of our efforts. This includes ecosystem health, community safety, and resource sustainability. With national strategy, regional oversight, and local implementation,

we aim to achieve outcomes that support the workforce and the resilience of both our natural environments and the communities we serve.

The National Park Service preserves unimpaired the natural and cultural resources and values of the National Park System for the enjoyment, education, and inspiration of this and future generations. This mission aligns with the vision of the National Cohesive Wildland Fire Management Strategy: *“To safely and effectively extinguish fire when needed; use fire where allowable; manage our natural resources; and as a nation to live with wildland fire.”* By effectively managing wildfire, we help maintain these treasured landscapes. Let us work with a sense of purpose, knowing that our efforts contribute to the enduring legacy of our national parks.

In conclusion, let us approach this season with a strong commitment to safety, continuous improvement, integrity, health, and strategic thinking. By working together and staying true to our values, we can effectively manage wildfires and honor the legacy of those who have fallen. Thank you for your dedication and service.

Cc: Division Chief, Fire and Aviation Management
Branch Chief, Wildland Fire
Associate Director, Visitor and Resource Protection