



U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management

BLM Fire

Fire Year 2022 Program Overview



The Bureau of Land Management Wildland Fire Program

The Bureau of Land Management Wildland Fire Management Program (BLM Fire) is the largest and most complex fire program within the Department of the Interior (DOI). The BLM represents 61% of DOI's fire-related workforce and is directly responsible for fire management on more than 245 million acres of public lands, predominantly in the western United States and Alaska; wildfire is prevalent across much of this

landscape. This land is commonly intermixed with other federal, state and local jurisdictions, making partnerships and collaborative efforts crucial to the mission of safety and fire management. Overall, BLM Fire implements fire protection on approximately 650 million acres of public land with other fire management agencies and manages fuels treatments to reduce wildfire risk and support healthy ecosystems across the landscape.

BLM Fire suppression resources



320 Engines



6 Veterans Crews



13 Hotshot Crews



150 Smokejumpers



34 RFPAs



31 Tactical Aircraft



25 Helicopters / 18 Helitack Crews



34 SEATs



23 Semi-Tractors



24 Water Tenders



21 Dozers

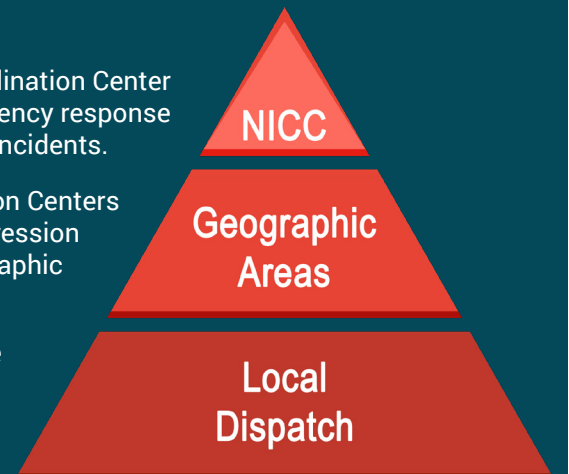


2 Fire Boats

Resource Mobilization

All fire suppression resources are supported by a three-tier interagency network of dispatch and coordination centers across the country. The national dispatch system's primary mission is the timely, cost effective, and efficient coordination, mobilization, and demobilization of wildland fire resources. Each tier has a unique role in locating and dispatching fire suppression resources to wildland fire incidents. Local level dispatch centers are responsible for initial wildfire response and support.

1. The National Interagency Coordination Center (NICC) provides national emergency response for wildland fire and all-hazard incidents.
2. 10 Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACCs) mobilize wildfire suppression resources within specific geographic areas of the U.S.
3. Local level dispatch centers are responsible for initial wildfire response and support.



Note: The number of hotshot crews includes two veterans crews. RFPAs are Rangeland Fire Protection Associations.

Unique fire management challenges

Most BLM-managed public lands are composed of non-forested shrub and grass ecosystems. Invasive weeds, which make landscapes more flammable, are present in many of these ecosystems. Cycles of frequent wildfire followed by invasive weeds are impacting vast areas of the western U.S., particularly in the sagebrush-steppe ecosystem. Because of the fire and invasives cycle, many western ecosystems are experiencing too much wildfire compared to historical fire regimes. Suppressing wildfires in these ecosystems is costly and puts wildland firefighters at risk.

The BLM is working to preserve ecosystems that are currently not impacted by invasive weeds while restoring ecological balance in other ecosystems where invasive weeds are changing the landscape and increasing wildfire risk. This work supports healthy public lands, reduces wildfire risk and decreases wildfire suppression costs.



56%

of wildfire acres burned in the continental U.S. occur on shrublands and grasslands

2,123

wildfires on BLM-managed public lands burned 400,280 acres under BLM protection in 2021, which are abnormally low numbers, particularly given large fire activity over the last ten years

↑ 70%

of all DOI-managed lands burned by wildfires are shrublands or grasslands

72%

BLM manages 72% of all DOI public lands that have high or very high fire risk

36 million

acres of BLM-managed public lands are at high or very high fire risk - much of this is due to invasive weeds

100,000 – 400,000

acre wildfires are now commonplace across the West

25 miles

of rangelands with invasive grasses can burn in just one day

150-500 square miles

of grass/shrub lands with invasive grasses present can burn in just a couple days

Fuels Management

The BLM Fuels Management program is focused on active management to reduce wildfire risk, improve wildfire resiliency, and promote fire-adapted communities. This effort is critical considering the vast spread of wildfire risk throughout the West, as the BLM works to address more than 70% of DOI's wildfire risk. To address these fire-invasives challenges, the BLM conducts a wide variety of fuels treatment projects, including mechanical treatments, chemical and biological treatments, and prescribed fire. Fuels treatment options are limited in areas where invasive weeds are present; many of these areas are experiencing too much wildfire. Prescribed burning is not an effective tool in areas impacted by invasives, which is why only 25% of all BLM fuels treatments consist of prescribed burning.

The BLM has outlined a plan to achieve at least 1 million acres of fuels treatments annually on

BLM-managed public lands, and to sustain that level of treatment for the next five years with expected funding increases. BLM has developed a national five-year wildfire risk assessment and will focus treatments in priority areas to protect and restore landscapes and to reduce wildfire risk near communities. In fiscal year 2022, BLM is planning to treat approximately 898,000 acres and working to increase capacity to meet the 1 million acre goal. By increasing fuels accomplishments, the BLM will improve firefighter and public safety; reduce wildfire impacts and costs; maintain and restore fire-resilient landscapes; and create long-term natural resource benefits. This plan will also involve adding contracting, grants and agreements capacity, as increasing fuels projects cannot be achieved without investing in these capabilities.

50% of DOI total

The BLM accomplishes more than 50% of the DOI's fuel treatments.



870,226 acres

In 2021, the BLM treated 870,226 acres of its planned 772,896 active management acres, which equates to 113% of the planned target acre total.



25%
of acres
accomplished



Chemical and Biological Treatments

25%
of acres
accomplished



Prescribed Fire / Fire Use Treatments

50%
of acres
accomplished



Mechanical Treatments

Fuel Breaks

Large swaths of grasses, brush, or other vegetation provide continuous fuels that can lead to catastrophic wildfires.



Fuel breaks thin out or break up the vegetation, which slows the progress and reduces the intensity of the wildfire, making it safer and easier for firefighters to control.



BLM Fire uses multiple fuels treatment methods. Fuel breaks reduce hazardous fuels and provide wildland firefighters a safe barrier to conduct fire suppression tactics.

The BLM also reduces hazardous fuels through fire use by allowing some wildfires to take their natural course when they can be safely and effectively managed to produce desired results.



45,959 acres

of resource benefit were achieved in wildfires, inching the BLM closer to the one million acre target.



Wildfire activity is becoming more extreme

10 million

In the last 10 years, more than 10 million acres have burned throughout the country three times: in 2020, 2017 and 2015. Between 1983-1992, wildfires burned an average of 2.7 million acres.

2020 10,122,336

2017 10,026,086

2015 10,125,149

6.8 million

Currently, the 10-year average number of acres burned is about 6.8 million acres per year and increasing.



75 Days



Across the West, the first wildfires of the year are starting earlier and lasting into the fall, making typical fire years 75 days longer now than they were 40 years ago.

Rising Costs

Fire suppression costs are also increasing, for example, suppression costs stayed below \$1 billion before the year 2000. Since 2010, fire suppression costs have risen beyond the \$1 billion mark consistently every year, with a record of more than \$3 billion in costs set in 2018. While the number of wildfires and acres burned can vary, fire years are, on average, becoming longer, costlier, and more complicated.



Structures Lost

Wildfires have destroyed more homes and communities in recent years: from 2018-2021 49,082 structures were lost in wildfires, of those, 30,713 were primary residences.



Fire Year Workforce



Firefighters are required to work earlier in the spring and longer into the fall than in previous years, causing fatigue and burnout issues. The BLM is working to shift away from a seasonal firefighting workforce because firefighters are in demand throughout most of the year.

Livable Wages

Federal wildland fire personnel wages have not kept up with inflation and private industry pay. In January 2022, the Office of Personnel Management implemented President Biden's Executive Order on Protecting the Federal Workforce to promote a \$15 per hour minimum wage for federal employees, which the BLM has been working towards for many years. The BLM Fire program is working to complete these long-term pay increases to offer a livable wage commensurate with wildland fire employees' hard work and dedication.



Workforce Transformation

A more permanent, year-round wildland fire workforce will be better poised to meet current wildland fire management demands while also providing better job opportunities. In fiscal year 2021, BLM received \$13 million for workforce transformation:

76 new wildland fire management and support personnel
428 existing seasonal positions converted to permanent and/or year-round



The BLM hopes to continue this effort with additional funding.



Wildland Fire Management Funding

The BLM Fire program is working to implement additional funding from the Disaster and Bipartisan Infrastructure bills:

Disaster:
\$53
million

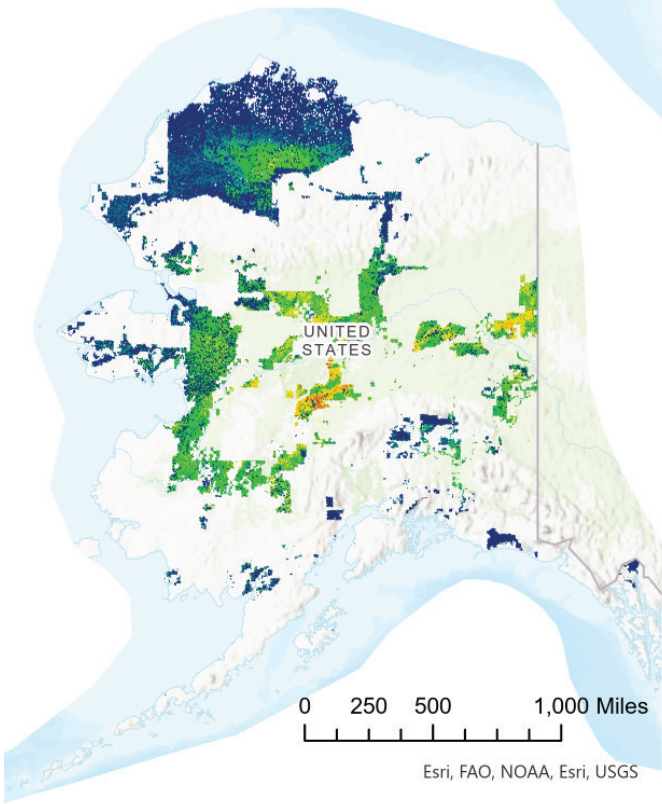
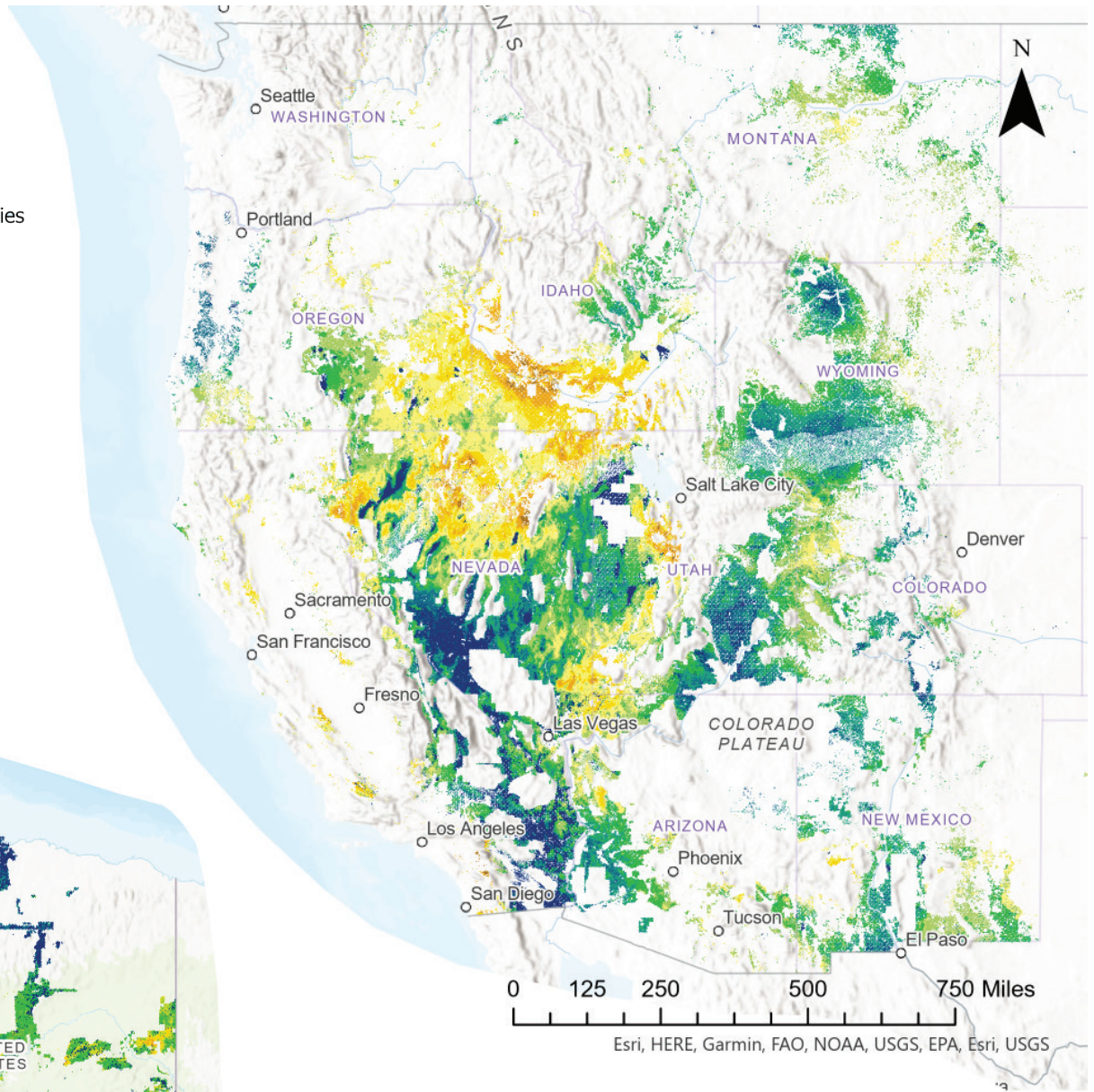
Fuels management: \$29 million
Burned Area Rehabilitation: \$24 million

Infrastructure:
\$230
million

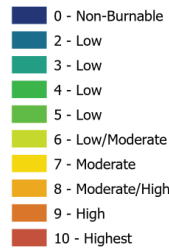
For radio technology, fuels management, firefighter pay and workforce.

BLM Wildfire Risk Assessment Map

Lower 48 Fire Risk Categories Fuels Management Priority



Alaska Fire Risk Categories Fuels Management Priority



BLM Fire

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