

WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT BUDGET

1 Introduction

The Wildland Fire Planning and Budget Program, in accordance with the National Park Service's (NPS) Budget Office, provides financial information and guidance for managing the fire management appropriation through the [NPS Wildland Fire & Aviation Budget Rules](#).

Funding for wildland fire management activities is provided through the Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriation Act, which may be supplemented by the emergency authority provisions of Section 102 of the Act which authorizes the Secretary of the Interior to transfer funds from one appropriation to another for specific emergency purposes.

Wildland fire management funds are no year funds, and are separate from other NPS appropriations, including the Operation of the National Park System (ONPS) appropriation. The NPS Branch of Wildland Fire at the Fire Management Program Center (FMPC), through the WASO Budget Office, distributes these funds to parks and regions.

Parks may use ONPS funds in addition to wildland fire management funds (preparedness and fuels) in order to achieve a higher level of response capability within and outside the defined fire season, accomplish fuels management projects, or to meet local interagency commitments.

Preparedness activities may also be augmented using fire severity funds due to an abnormal increase in fire potential or danger; or to fire seasons that either start earlier or last longer than planned. Authorization to use severity funding is only provided in writing based on a written request with supporting documentation. Supplemental policy on fire severity funding is found in *Reference Manual 18 Chapter 5, Preparedness*; and in the *Interagency Standards for Fire and Fire Aviation Operations Chapter 10, Preparedness*.

2 Responsibilities

2.1 National Level

Responsibilities at the national level include:

- Formulating the NPS portion of the Department of the Interior Wildland Fire Budget

- Coordinating with interagency partners and the Office of Wildland Fire (OWF) through the entire budget formulation, allocation, and execution process
- Preparing and distributing the current year wildland fire management budget to the regions
- Loading funding into the financial system at the regional allocation level
- Tracking current and prior year(s) status of funds to ensure the NPS stays within its budget authority for the Wildland Fire Appropriation
- Managing emergency suppression funds for the NPS and coordinating with the other bureaus to maintain adequate emergency suppression funding across all bureaus
- Providing funding adjustments as needed during the fiscal year
- Providing within-region adjustments when requested by the regional office
- Developing, delivering, and maintaining decision support tools for wildland fire planning and budget
- Conducting site visits to park and regional offices for program reviews and financial audits

2.2 Regional Level

Responsibilities at the regional level include:

- Coordinating with parks to determine program workload, complexity, and eligibility to receive base fire funding and staffing
- Conducting site visits to parks for direct oversight, fire management planning, and financial reviews
- Determining coordination and support funding needs by individual program requirements and interagency obligations (such as interagency shared resources including retardant bases, area coordination centers, aerial fire detection, and helicopters)
- Establishing park capital equipment needs
- Managing the use of all positions within the region and finding efficiencies where possible
- Managing the regional budget package; moving funding around the region as needed to enable parks to manage their programs
- Providing the national office with a record of all within-region transfers of funds
- Providing quarterly and/or monthly regional status of funds to the national office highlighting any overage/shortage of funds that cannot be used or covered within the region

2.3 Park Level

Responsibilities at the park level include:

- Analyzing, determining, and justifying park fire management needs including the following:
 - Permanent and career seasonal staffing
 - Seasonal staffing and support for wildfire response
 - Fuels project funding
 - Training
 - Interagency shared resources
 - Capital equipment
 - Working Capital Fund
 - Fire facilities deferred maintenance and construction
- Managing positions and FTEs within the park and/or regions authorized amount
- Tracking status of funds for the park
- Working with the regional office on funding needs, staffing issues, and project work
- Corresponding through the regional office on issues requiring national involvement

3 Financial Planning

Proper financial planning ensures that the NPS is spending its fire management funding in the most efficient manner and can be used to establish regional and national priorities across the NPS based on current and predicted funding levels.

Every region and park unit that receives wildland fire management funding will complete a financial plan prior to the start of each fiscal year. Guidance, standardized forms, and a regional budget target will be provided to each regional office. The region will provide individual park level budget targets to aid in the completion of the park financial plan.

4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE) Management

The Office of Management and Budget allocates funding and FTEs separately to the fire program, these funds and FTEs are not part of the ONPS appropriation. Parks receiving base fire funding must utilize these funds for fire dedicated functions. This requirement means that at least 80 percent of the normal tour-of-duty of base-fire-funded employees must be spent on wildland fire activities, and that these employees must not be assigned management of other major programs that would require more than 20 percent of their time. Expenditures and obligations for fire accounts are reported separately from ONPS accounts at the close of each fiscal year.

FTEs are counted by actual usage. One FTE is counted for every 2080 hours of base time charged to an activity. The *NPS Wildland Fire & Aviation Budget Rules* details the appropriate use of FTE within an activity.

5 Guidelines for Managing Wildland Fire Management Accounts

5.1 Account Integrity

The wildland fire management appropriation provides funding for essential fire planning and oversight functions and for budgeted activities necessary in preparation for the normal fire season (refer to the *NPS Wildland Fire & Aviation Budget Rules* for the various activities identified in the current year appropriation). Wildland fire management funds must not be diverted for non-fire program support.

5.2 Account Structure

The current year account structure is annually updated and included in the *NPS Wildland Fire & Aviation Budget Rules*. A glossary and explanation of budget terms are on the [NPS WASO Budget](#) website.

The National Park Service uses the Financial and Business Management System (FBMS) for budget execution.

- Regional authorizations are loaded into FBMS by the WASO Budget Execution staff at the request of the FMPC Budget Office
- Regional offices are responsible for transferring funds to the park level within two weeks of receipt from the FMPC Budget office
- Regional and park offices are responsible for inputting accounts into FBMS
- Each region must balance within FBMS availability controls at fiscal year-end. The activities and sub-activities are outlined in the annual budget and reflect the distribution of the NPS wildland fire appropriation.

5.3 Authorizations

The FMPC Budget Office, acting through the NPS WASO Budget Office, will establish wildland fire management funding authorizations for national and regional offices. These authorizations may be adjusted periodically by the FMPC Budget Office through the WASO Budget Office, with the concurrence of the regional staff.

5.4 Accountable Property

The purchase and tracking of accountable property will be in accordance with the NPS property system. The following [Director's Orders](#) offer NPS guidance on property:

- *DO 44, Personal Property Management*
- *DO 62, Property Acquisition*
- *DO 80, Real Property Asset Management*

The authorization process for purchasing accountable property within a park are described in the *NPS Wildland Fire & Aviation Budget Rules*.

5.5 Account Management and Tracking

The FMPC Budget Office will track the status of funds at the subactivity level. Parks and regional offices may establish *optional* project levels within each program for non-emergency sub-activities, except in the specific programs identified in the *NPS Wildland Fire & Aviation Budget Rules*. Significant over- and under-expenditures within a program may indicate the need for a more detailed program review and financial management audit.

Emergency Suppression Operations funds for the NPS are managed at the national level. The total funding for this activity within the Interior Wildland Fire Appropriation may be insufficient to cover these emergency expenditures during severe fire years. For this situation, the Secretary of the Interior will first utilize FLAME funds to cover anticipated suppression expenditures. The Secretary may also use the authority under Section 102 of the general provisions of the Interior Appropriation Act to transfer funds from other programs. An emergency supplemental appropriation may also be requested.

5.6 Account Adjustments

The most current procedures for account adjustments are available in the *NPS Wildland Fire & Aviation Budget Rules*.

5.7 Year-End Reconciliation

Year-end accountability will be managed at the activity level. The WASO Budget Office will report all expenditures and obligations to the Department. Although wildland fire allocations are non-expiring funds, they are managed as though they are an annual appropriation, and any unobligated funds will be withdrawn at the activity level.

The wildland fire accounts follow the year-end closing procedures, distributed each year by the NPS comptroller's office. This document is posted on the [Administrative Financial System \(AFS\)](#) home page.

6 Collections

6.1 Fire Protection Assistance

The 1999 Interior Appropriation (Department of the Interior and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 1999, as included in Public Law 105-277) allows the NPS to credit the Wildland Fire Appropriation for sums received for fire protection assistance. The NPS has a separate activity within the appropriation to collect and expend the money collected through fire protection activities.

6.2 System Unit Resource Protection Act (SURPA)

The System Unit Resource Protection Act (54 U.S.C. § 100722 *et seq.*) states that any person that destroys, causes the loss of, or injures any System Unit Resource is liable to the United States for response costs and damages resulting from the destruction, loss, or injury. The statute gives NPS the authority to take civil action against the responsible parties who started a fire. This includes all human-caused wildfires starting inside or outside the boundaries of the park unit.

The term System Unit Resource means any living or non-living resource that is located within the boundaries of a System unit. Response costs means actions taken by the Secretary to (A) prevent or minimize destruction or loss of or injury to a System unit resource; (B) abate or minimize the imminent risk of the destruction, loss, or injury; or (C) monitor ongoing effects of incidents causing the destruction, loss, or injury. Damages include the costs of restoring or replacing the injured resources and the costs of damage assessment.

All response costs and damages recovered under SURPA will be deposited in the DOI Restoration Fund, per NPS policy, prior to being dispersed to the appropriate NPS office/park. Past response or restoration (suppression, emergency stabilization, burned area rehabilitation) costs paid by the national fire accounts and reimbursed under SURPA will be managed by the Fire Management Program Center. Monies received for costs not covered by the national fire accounts or for future restoration will be managed by the park unit. Additional information on System Unit Resource Protection can be found in Directors Order 14 and the Damage Assessment restoration Handbook.

SURPA is managed through the NPS WASO Environmental Quality Division, Resource Protection Branch (EQD/RPB). Parks should contact EQD/RPB as soon as possible when considering seeking costs and damages from a responsible party or if another Federal agency is including the NPS costs in its claim to a responsible party.