



# IAFC

International Association of Fire Chiefs

Chief John S. Butler  
President and Chair  
Board of Directors

## **Policy Response and Recommendations**

### ***Federal Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission Final Report***

In response to the Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission final report to Congress, the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC) supports findings and federal policy recommendations in the report that align with the IAFC's ongoing efforts to reduce the risk of wildfire in our communities and to better address our nation's growing wildfire crisis.

The final report, released on September 27, 2023, outlines a comprehensive, consensus-based, set of recommendations to Congress to change the nation's relationship with wildfire. While the focus in this report is on federal legislative action, the solutions proposed are also relevant to state, local, Tribal and territorial governments, the nonprofit, private and academic sectors, and the public at large.

#### **Background**

The risk of wildland and wildland-urban interface fires is increasing in both significance and prevalence in the United States. Reasons for this trend include the growing density and decreasing health of our forests; a hotter and dryer climate trend; and the increase in the number and density of homes built in the wildland-urban interface. The statistics show a general trend of an increasing size of wildland fires, an increase in number of homes destroyed, and an increase in both suppression costs and of financial losses due to wildland-urban interface fires.

The Wildland Fire Mitigation and Management Commission (the Commission), created by President Biden's Bipartisan Infrastructure Law (BIL) and announced in December 2021, was charged with making recommendations to improve federal policies related to the mitigation, suppression, and management of wildland fires in the United States, and the rehabilitation of land in the United States devastated by wildland fires. The Commission was tasked with developing two reports to Congress: a report on aerial firefighting, and another report to deliver a comprehensive set of recommendations to address the nation's wildfire crisis. The second report was released on September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023.

In addition to establishing the Commission, the BIL provides historic funding for a suite of programs aimed at reducing wildfire risks, detecting wildfires, instituting firefighter workforce reforms, and building more resilient infrastructure. The Commission's work builds on existing interagency federal efforts, such as the Wildland Fire Leadership Council and the White House Wildfire Resilience Interagency Working Group and will continue to pursue an all-of-government approach to wildfire risk reduction and resilience.

The Commission is composed of representatives from federal agencies, state, local and Tribal governments, and representatives from the private sector and has been meeting regularly over the past year to craft these reports. While the International Association of Fire Chiefs did not have a specific representative on the Commission assigned to the organization, the IAFC Wildland Fire Policy Committee (WFPC) has maintained regular interactions with members of the Commission throughout the process and submitted recommendations through the established portal for consideration by the Commission work teams.

## Position

The IAFC supports collaborative efforts to reduce wildfire risk in communities and to better adapt to wildland and wildland-urban interface fires. The themes of the Commission report align well with IAFC positions on wildfire risk, preparedness and response.

Past IAFC positions which remain relevant within the report include the following:

- Support for the National Wildland Fire Cohesive Strategy
  - Restoring and maintaining resilient landscapes
  - Promote fire-adapted communities
  - Safe and effective wildland response
- Utilization of Local Government Resources for Wildland and WUI Fires
  - Solutions must be collaborative
  - Resources are frequently not being effectively utilized
  - All levels of government should have appropriate representation in collaborative organizations such as the National Wildfire Coordinating Group (NWCG), National Multi-Agency Coordination Group (NMAC), Geographic Area Coordination Centers (GACCs), and qualification committees.
  - Qualification management in wildland should use NWCG 310-1 as the common framework but promote tools such as Recognition of Prior Learning and the Skills Crosswalk.
  - Resource ordering should be accomplished using a single platform that tracks resources through all stages of response and integrates all existing tools.
  - Reimbursement management must be effective, ensure timely recovery, and be based upon improved and perhaps standardized agreements.
- Collaborative Efforts for Reducing Community Risk in the Wildland Urban Interface
  - Cooperation and coordination are essential
  - Support from federal agencies for existing and expanded programs is key to ensure local partnership and capability
  - Risk assessment, education of the public in general and elected and appointed leaders, community planning, and mitigation practices are all effective and recommended.

The following are specific priorities of IAFC that align with recommendations within the Commission report. Specific report recommendations follow each priority statement.

- Create a national inventory of all hazard resources and a shared real-time system for deployment of all resources, and to the extent possible, promote closest appropriate unit response. (47, 52, 53)
- Ensure effective integration of certifications and qualifications for the all-hazard workforce. (54, 55, 56)

- Create a simplified and standardized national agreement to be used by all states to capture and engage resources at all levels which will help to ensure timely reimbursements for actual costs. (47, 50, 51, 52, 53)
- Allow resource ordering and reimbursement processes to be used for prescribed burns. (14)
- Improve funding and budgeting processes to ensure a consistent and year-round workforce. (119, 120, 121, 122, 123, 125)
- Create a shared all-hazard incident decision making process using comprehensive data and modern technology, including integrated remote sensing. (33, 45, 83, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108, 109, 118)
- Provide true nation-wide broadband capability for communications and data sharing. (118)
- Create a single consolidated data collection and reporting platform and ensure that data is accessible for all users. (1, 4, 33, 44, 83, 104, 105, 106, 107, 139)
- Promote dedicated local representatives on the National Multi-Agency Coordinating Group and Geographic Area Coordination Centers. (60, 139)
- Support adoption of enhanced building/wildfire planning and codes that recognize structure hardening and best fire-resistant practices at the local and state levels. (1, 2, 3, 6, 129, 134)
- Include local governmental, non-governmental, and private participation in the planning, communication, and execution of wildland fire mitigation and landscape efforts, prescribed fires, and post-burn assessment. (12, 13, 17, 18, 23, 25, 33, 40, 41, 43, 57, 58, 60, 66, 67, 71, 72, 134)
- Create post-fire recovery Incident Management Teams so communities are not left with the issues after a response oriented IMT leaves. (60, 66, 67, 68, 75, 83)
- Ensure funding and create navigator positions to help communities access needed preparation and recovery funds. (36, 61, 62, 63, 64, 65, 68, 124, 126, 129, 134, 142, 143, 144)
- Facilitate changes to environmental clearances to expedite prescribed burns. (12, 108, 109)
- Invest in physical and mental health programs that are targeted across all response levels. (94, 97, 98, 100)

The IAFC is supportive of the shared framework that has been established during the Commission process, and eager to implement those specific recommendations that are within the IAFC scope of interest. The WFPC will continue to analyze the Commission report to map agreed upon solutions to this emerging problem, and to endorse specific recommendations.

The IAFC supports monitoring of forward progress of the Commission report recommendations through assigning and entrusting an oversight body to provide annual reports to Congressional Wildfire Caucus and Congressional Fire Services Caucus to include representatives from USDA Forest Service, U.S. Department of the Interior, U.S. Fire Administration, International Association of Fire Chiefs, National Association of State Foresters, Tribal representation, National League of Cities, National Association of Counties, and National Governors Association.

#### **About the International Association of Fire Chiefs (IAFC)**

*The IAFC represents the leadership of firefighters and emergency responders worldwide. IAFC members are the world's leading experts in firefighting, emergency medical services, terrorism response, hazardous materials response, natural disasters, search and rescue, and public safety policy. Since 1873, the IAFC has provided a forum for its members to exchange ideas, develop professionally and uncover the latest best practices and services available for first responders. For IAFC policy information, contact the IAFC Government Relations and Policy Department at 703-273-0911 / IAFC Headquarters, 8251 Greensboro Drive, Suite 650, McLean, VA 22102.*

