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# Lewiston Tribune

## Idaho wildfire toll this year: 86K acres

Idaho Department of Lands says most fires this summer were caused by humans

- By Of the Tribune
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Fires burned more than 86,000 acres in Idaho this season.

Idaho Department of Lands Director Dustin Miller gave the Idaho Board of Land Commissioners what's expected to be the final fire season update Tuesday morning.

The state spent a total of around \$22 million on fire suppression, but \$4.7 million is reimbursable. Miller said that the reimbursable costs are when IDL personnel are sent to land owned by other agencies and those agencies pay back the state department.

Only 2,582 acres burned on IDL land this year, which is significantly less than previous years.

"That's a pretty impressive feat given the kind of acreage that our folks are protecting," Miller said. "I'm really proud of the work our men and women gave on the fire line."

Last year, around 4,600 acres of IDL land burned, and in 2021 nearly 142,000 acres burned. There is an upward trend of more unwanted, human-caused fires, Miller said, with 206 of the 284 total fires this year being started by humans.

Most of the acres burned were U.S. Forest Service land, which accounted for 64,789 acres. Miller said this was the first year operating under the new Master Cooperative Wildland Fire Management Agreement, which includes the Bureau of Land Management, the National Park Service, the Bureau of Indian Affairs, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and the U.S. Forest Service in addition to IDL.

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The agreement meant moving some fire protection boundaries, meaning the department gave up primary responsibility for some areas and took responsibility in other ones.

The agreement saved the department two fires and 3,343 acres compared to the 2016 master agreement, Miller said.

The Legislature appropriated \$100 million for the Fire Suppression Fund, and the department anticipates around \$64 million will be left over; this fund is a pre-paid reserve funding for emergency fire suppression. In the 2021 fire season, the state spent more than \$67 million on fire suppression.

Gov. Brad Little asked if the department is doing prescribed burning, and Miller responded that both the state agency and federal entities in Idaho have been doing prescribed burns as a way to manage the land and reduce fire fuels. Prescribed burns aren't counted in acres burned and are paid for through operating funds rather than fire suppression funds.

Temperatures and precipitation are "returning to seasonal norms," according to the meeting materials, and the department isn't expecting significant fire danger or activity.

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