

STATE BOARD OF LAND COMMISSIONERS

December 17, 2024

Information Agenda

Subject

Fire Program Strategic Plan Update

Background

The State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board) requested a strategic plan for the Idaho Department of Lands (Department) fire program. The Department needs to plan and implement changes in fire organization structure, training, staffing, and equipment to respond effectively to predicted increases in wildfire size, intensity, duration and complexity.

Developing a robust and adaptive fire management structure within the Department is crucial to safeguarding Idaho's communities, natural resources, and economic assets in the face of escalating fire threats.

Discussion

The Department's Fire Program Strategic Plan will provide a forward-looking analysis that evaluates future organizational changes required to successfully address population growth and the growing problem of wildland urban interface fires.

The intent of the plan is to address the following problem statement:

Problem Statement: The Department's fire program is operating on the edge of its capabilities during periods with multiple ignitions, extended attack and long duration fire seasons. Fire seasons are increasingly severe and prolonged, federal fire programs are reducing their capacities and transferring more responsibility for wildfire suppression to state agencies, and the amount of coordination needed to acquire resources during a busy season has dramatically increased. Additionally, the fire environment is growing more complex and is further impacted by rapid population growth, highlighting the need for an effective fire management program.

The Department believes this vision statement provides high level guidance for the desired future state of the fire program:

Vision Statement: Meeting future wildfire challenges through effective initial attack and robust incident management capabilities.

The Department seeks feedback on whether continued focus on effective initial attack and increased incident management capability is consistent with the expectations of the Land Board and stakeholders.

The Department will present a complete plan to the Land Board including alternatives and recommendations in spring of 2025. The Department is currently evaluating the following:

- Other states with significant fire programs have changed drastically in the last decade. What can the Department learn from those changes, including wildfire suppression program structure and interactions with emergency management and fire chief organizations?
- What are the needs of the Department's fire program to respond to the direction outlined in the Governor's Wildfire Report Recommendations in conjunction with partners?
- How does an expanded program best fit within the Department's organizational structure? Are organizational changes needed?

Through this strategic planning effort, the Department has identified some current needs that will keep the fire program moving forward in response to increasing demands. These include compensation changes, expansion of interagency coordination with Idaho Office of Emergency Management, and increased coordination with local fire departments to meet the agencies' objectives and provide a well-coordinated robust wildfire response. The recommended changes to meet current program expectations are categorized by Fire Bureau, Operations, and Other in Attachment 1.

Attachments

1. Fire Program Current Needs

Fire Program Current Needs

The following tables outline 1–3 year needs to meet current program expectations.

Table 1: Fire Bureau Needs

Description	Action	FY Implementation
Fire Emergency Support Program Manager	New position/FTE	2026
Assessment Program Manager	New position/FTE	2026
New assessment software	Capital outlay request	2026
Camera/radio equipment	Capital outlay / Operating expense requests	2026
Aviation Section Manager	New position/FTE	2026
Re-class Prevention and Outreach Program Specialist position into Prevention/Fire Information Program Manager	Re-classification	2027
Re-class Helicopter Operations Program Specialist to Program Manager–Rotor Wing (after Helitack to Operations migration)	Re-classification	2027
Aviation facilities funding	Capital outlay / Operating expense requests	2027
Radio/Detection Program Manager	New position/FTE	2028
Prevention Program Specialists	New positions/FTEs	2028
3 new prevention vehicles	Capital outlay expansion request	2028

Table 2: Operations Needs

Description	Action	FY Implementation
Compensation adjustment for Resource Foreman to \$25.00/hour	Change in starting rate for this position	2026
Remove Resource Specialist underfill and hire at Senior rate	IDL process/policy change	2026
9 Resource Specialist Assistant Wardens	New positions	2027
Make all 1385 positions fully funded	Temporary personnel cost (TPC) request	2027
20 Resource Foremen .83 positions (in Helitack, Initial Attack modules, engines)	New positions	2028

Table 3: Other Fire Program Needs

Description	Action	FY Implementation
Fire Facilities Plan	Create/execute a build out of fire facilities to accommodate the expansion of the fire program at each district	2026
Re-class agency Safety Program Manager position to a Bureau Chief	Re-classification	2026