

Public Lands Committee  
Requesting USFS Rulemaking and NEPA for Wildland Fire Management Is Imperative  
With Immediate Interim Initial Fire Attack Direction

**Issue:** Wildland Fires continue to take lives, livelihoods and destroy millions of acres of lands and resources with the United States Forest Service (USFS) operating under a Wildland Fire Management "Direction" that circumvents the Administrative Procedures Act, The National Forest Management Act (NFMA), and the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) as well as the required inclusion of cooperating agencies, including counties and states, and with necessary public input.

**Proposed Policy:** NACo urges the United States Forest Service to initiate the Rulemaking process (NEPA) to develop an official Wildland Fire Management Policy. This policy is to be developed with counties as cooperating agencies and with public involvement at every step. The NEPA analysis consists of the indirect and direct interdisciplinary environmental effects of implementation of an alternative Wildland Fire Management Policy. During the Rulemaking process, we request the USFS to immediately suppress all fires on federal lands excluding prescribed fires until such time that a balanced approach can be attained as part of the Rulemaking process.

**Background:** Western region Counties are dealing with devastating effects of the ever-increasing number of wildland acres burnt (6.5 million acres in 2021) in megafires at a temperature and intensity that leaves nothing but scorched earth in their wake; lives lost; homes, businesses and livelihoods destroyed; adverse environmental effects on all natural resources (including water) in the counties where occurring as well as nationally, through the many hundreds of tons of CO2 emissions in the smoke from wildland fire that also exceed all human health standards for mercury and silicates. The loss of life, property damage and the burning of millions of acres of highly productive lands and natural resources have also led to increases in fire insurance and cancellations.

NACo supports the counties in their cooperating status and authorities in their imperative participation in the formalized development of land management plans. However, many Forest Plans are currently in Plan Revision without a Wildland Fire Management Policy formalized through rulemaking, county and public involvement and analyzed as to environmental effects of implementation.

NACo urges Congress to take immediate action to schedule Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee hearings in the 2022 Legislative Session requiring the USFS to address forest management planning, the need for rulemaking and environmental analysis of wildland fire management.

**Fiscal/Urban/Rural Impact:** Would allow counties to be engaged as cooperating agencies to represent the interests of their constituents and the American people in providing policy input and development of the formal common sense and science based formal wildland fire management alternatives and the associated interdisciplinary science based environmental impact statement regarding the preferred alternative. The current lack of policy has impacted counties, their residents and their visitors adversely.

**Sponsor:** Daniel Anaiah Kirk, Chairperson on behalf of Tuolumne County Board of Supervisors

