



Woodrat Fire, 2015

Overview of Fires in Idaho and Associated Costs

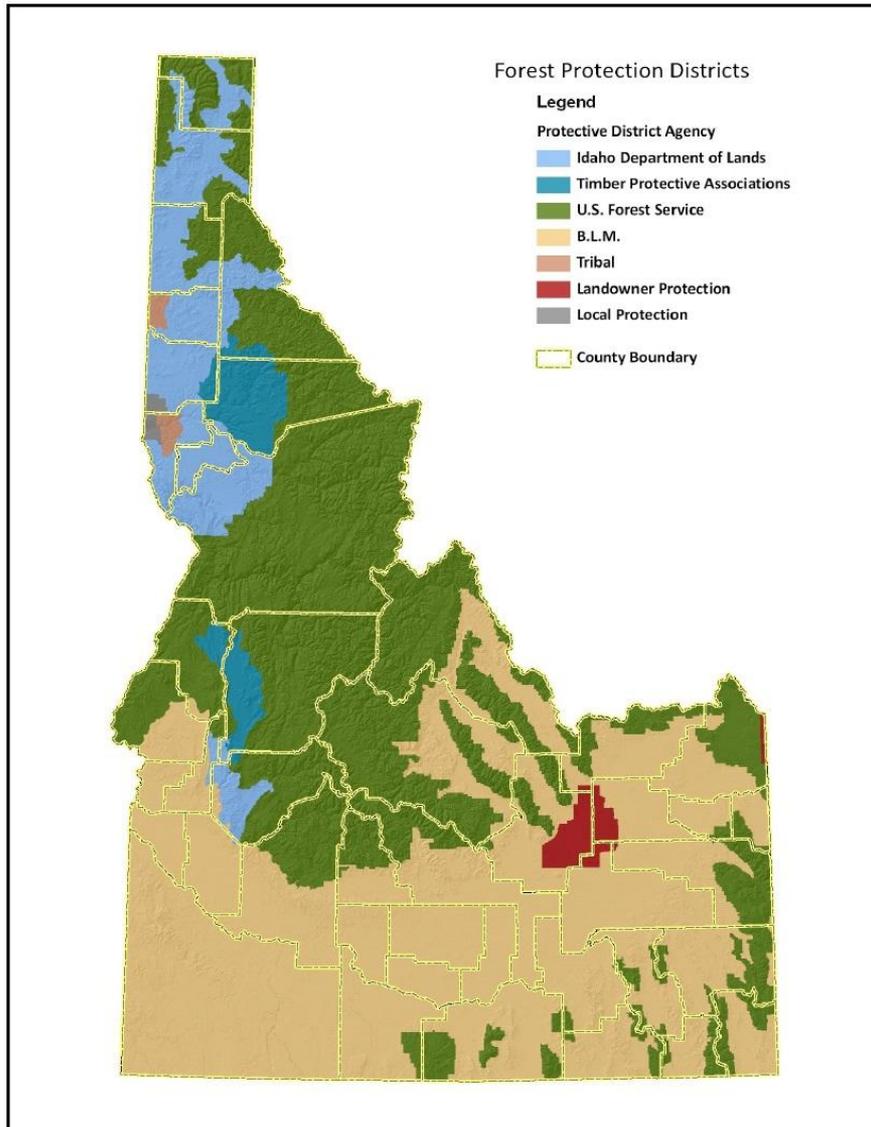
Natural Resources Interim Committee

October 16, 2015

Presentation by State Forester David Groeschl

Idaho Department of Lands

Wildfire Response in Idaho



- ▶ 14 forest protective districts
 - ▶ U.S. Forest Service
 - ▶ Bureau of Land Management
 - ▶ Six rangeland fire protection associations assist BLM
 - ▶ **State of Idaho**
 - ▶ 10 IDL districts
 - ▶ 2 timber protective associations
 - ▶ 6.3 million acres of mostly privately-owned and State-owned forests
- ▶ >200 local/rural fire districts provide structure protection in non-urban parts of state

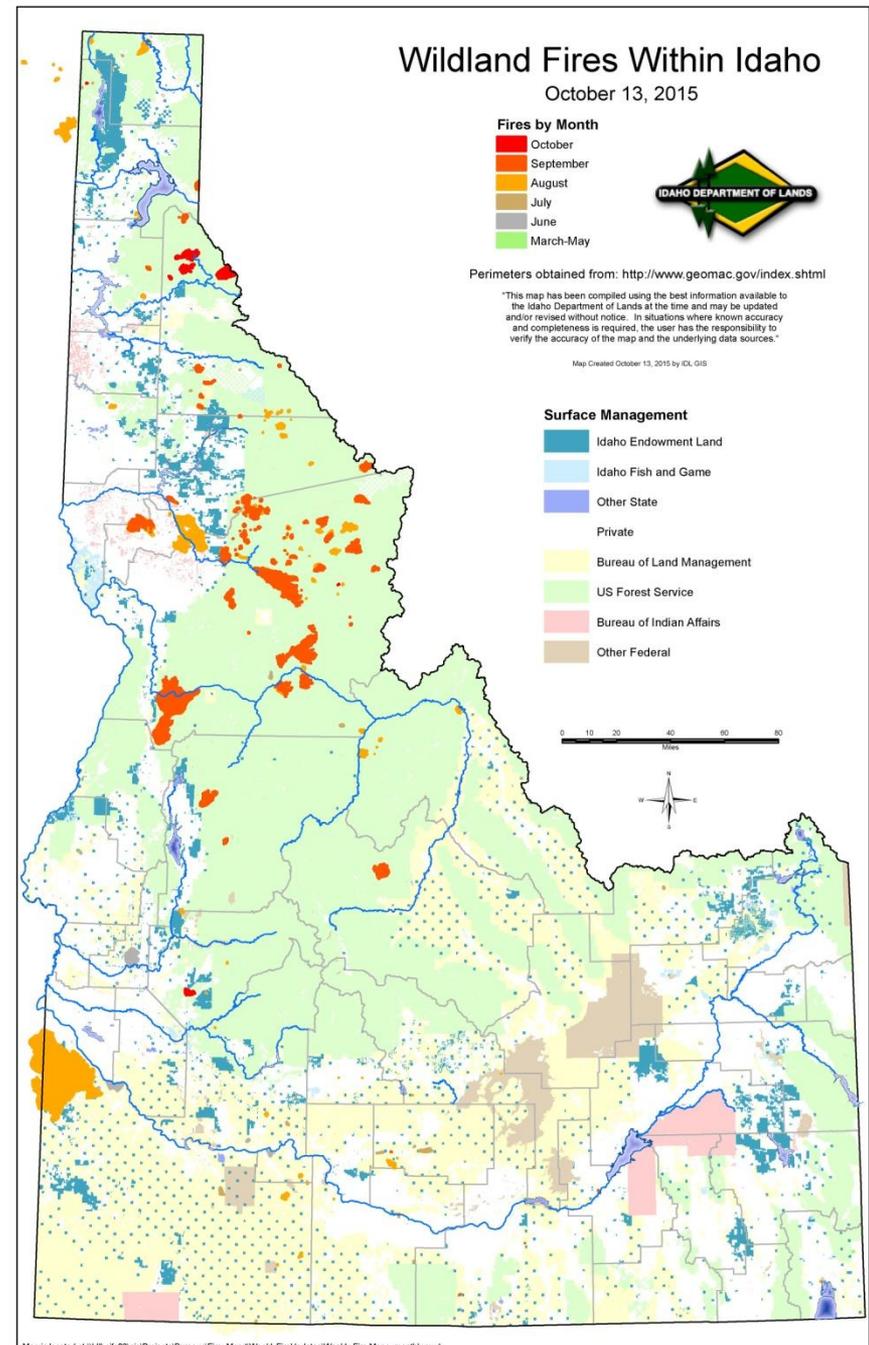
2015 Fire Season

▶ Total acres burned in Idaho
= Approx. 739,000 ac.*

▶ Acres burned by owner

- ▶ USFS 348,000 ac.
- ▶ BLM 230,000 ac.
- ▶ Private 119,000 ac.
- ▶ IDL 28,000 ac.
- ▶ BIA 11,000 ac.
- ▶ Other 3,000 ac.

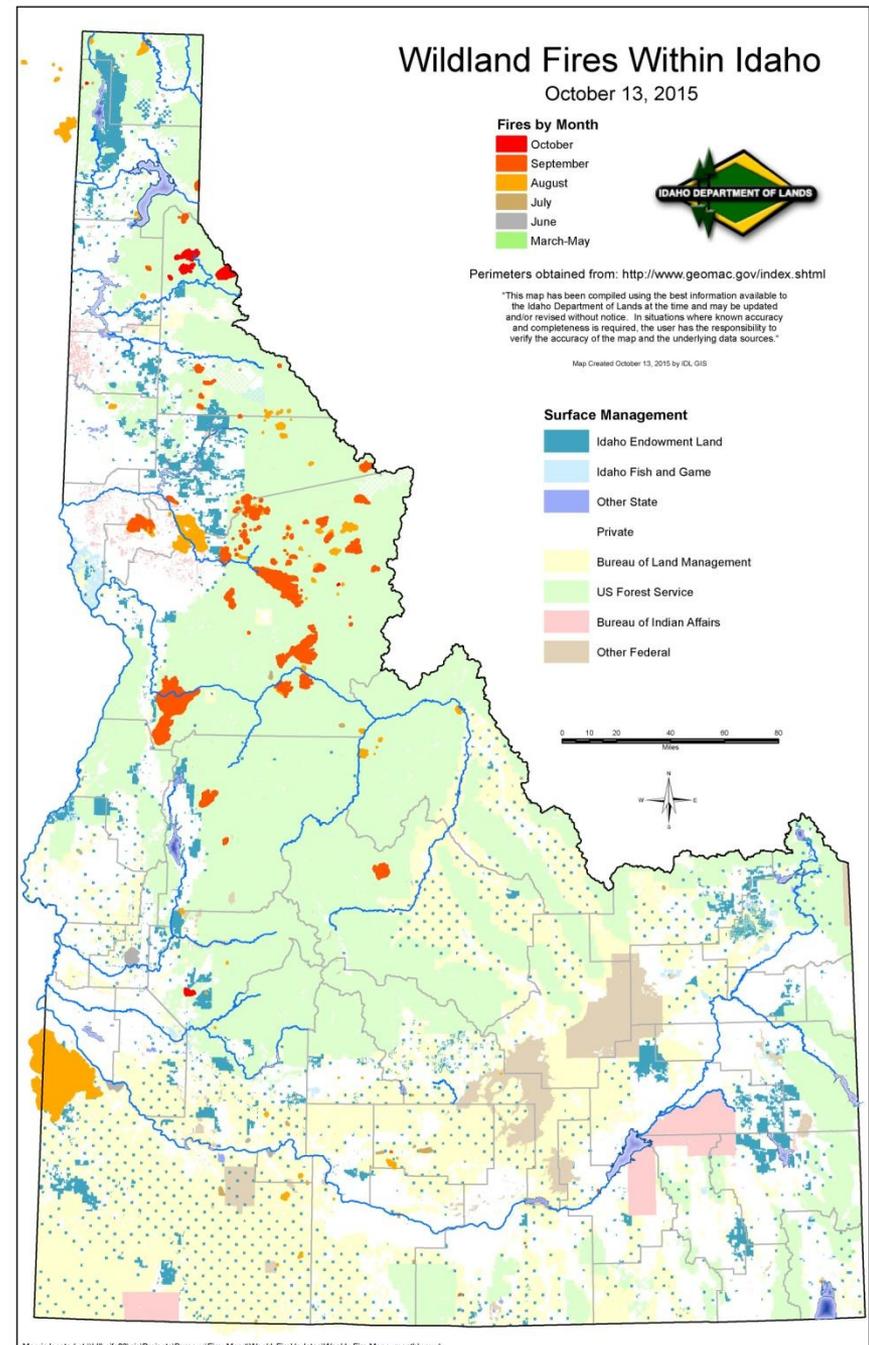
*As of Oct. 13, 2015



2015 Fire Season

- ▶ Acres burned in IDL protection = 74,977 ac.*
 - ▶ 617% of 20-year average
- ▶ 291 fires* in IDL protection
 - ▶ 90% of 20-year average
 - ▶ Nearly half human-caused

*As of Oct. 13, 2015. Final figures will be available in December.



Incident Management Teams

- ▶ Interagency group of fire management professionals specially trained and experienced in managing complex wildfires
- ▶ Agencies order a team when a fire escapes initial attack and is expected to exceed the agency's local district resources



- ▶ “Type 1” (most complex) through “Type 5” (least complex)
 - ▶ High costs associated with use of Type 1, 2 incident management teams
-

2015 Fire Season



Clearwater Complex Fire, 2015

- ▶ Fourteen IDL incidents required use of 27 incident management teams
 - ▶ Emergency disaster declaration (FEMA) for portions of Clearwater Complex Fires, Municipal Fire, Cape Horn Fire

- ▶ Largest, most expensive fire = Clearwater Complex Fires
 - ▶ \$25.2 million and 68,100 acres burned
 - ▶ 48 residences, 70 other outbuildings lost
-



2015 Fire Season

▶ 2015 State of Idaho Suppression Costs*

\$54,448,000 Net Obligation to General Fund

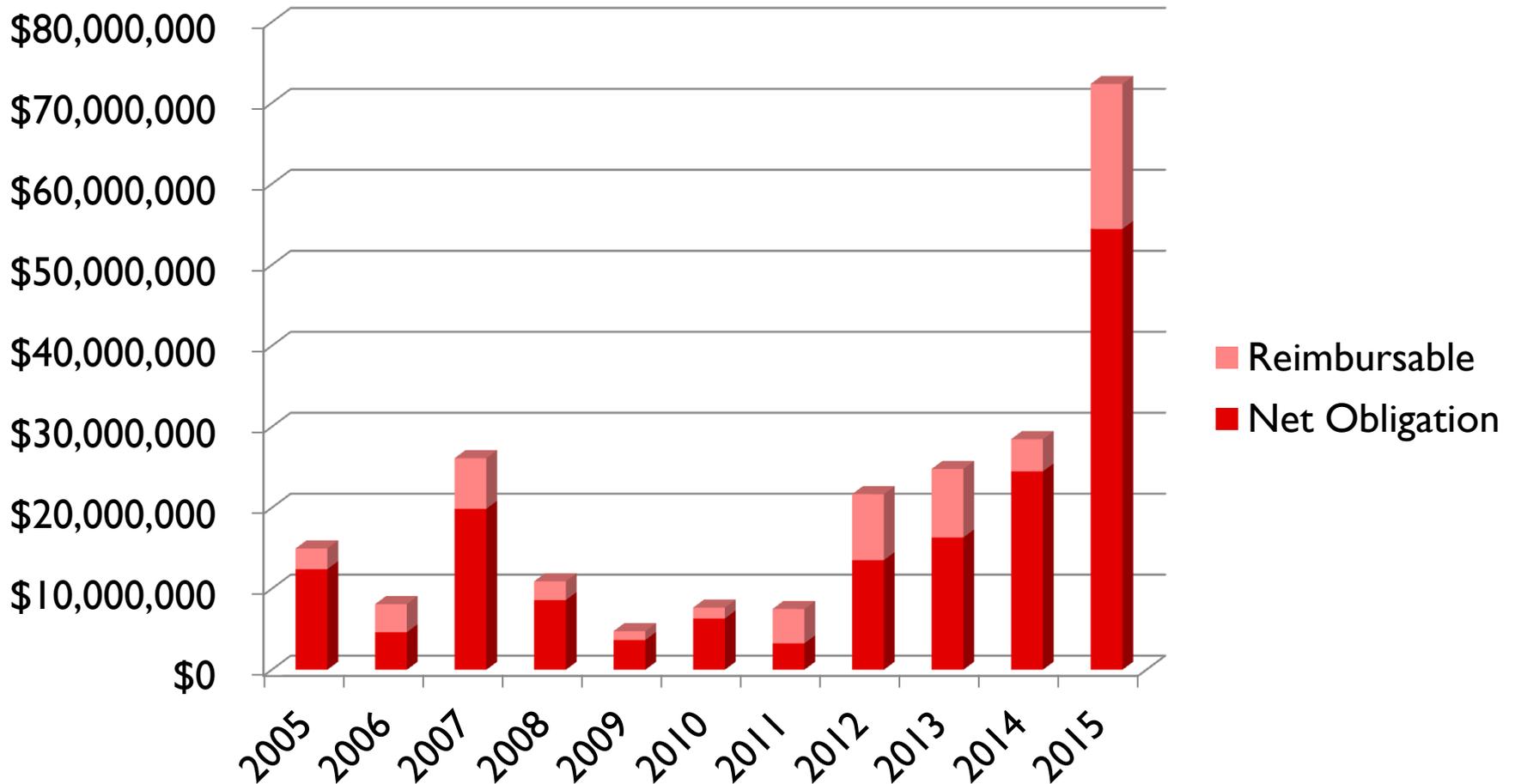
+ \$17,902,000 Reimbursable**

\$72,350,000 Total Cost to Suppression Account

**As of Oct. 6, 2015. Does not include Walker Fire.*

*** IDL is reimbursed for providing assistance on federally managed fires, fires out of state, or on IDL fires that qualify for a FEMA Fire Management Assistance Grant (FMAG).*

IDL Suppression Costs*



*As of Oct. 6, 2015. Does not include Walker Fire.

Fire Protection Funding

- ▶ Two categories:
 - ▶ Preparedness
 - ▶ Suppression





Preparedness Funding

- ▶ **Cost of having resources ready before fire season**
 - ▶ Hiring firefighters
 - ▶ Training, tools, supplies
 - ▶ Purchasing and leasing equipment such as fire engines
 - ▶ **IDL 2015 fire season (FY16) preparedness budget = \$8,019,014**
 - ▶ **Funded through combination of General Fund, federal funds, forest land assessment**
 - ▶ Forest land assessment = 60 cents/acre with surcharge for forested parcels with structures
 - ▶ IDL (as landowner) contributes 60 cents/acre on 974,312 endowment acres in State of Idaho protection = \$584,587 in FY15
-



Suppression Funding

- ▶ Costs incurred when personnel and equipment are dispatched to a fire
 - ▶ Deficiency warrant authority allows IDL to spend money to promptly suppress wildfires
 - ▶ The Legislature usually appropriates funding equal to the negative balance in the Deficiency Fund on June 30 of the previous year
 - ▶ Mainly covers costs incurred during *previous* fiscal year and before, or two fire seasons ago and before
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Questions



Wildland Fires Within Idaho

October 13, 2015

Fires by Month

- October
- September
- August
- July
- June
- March-May



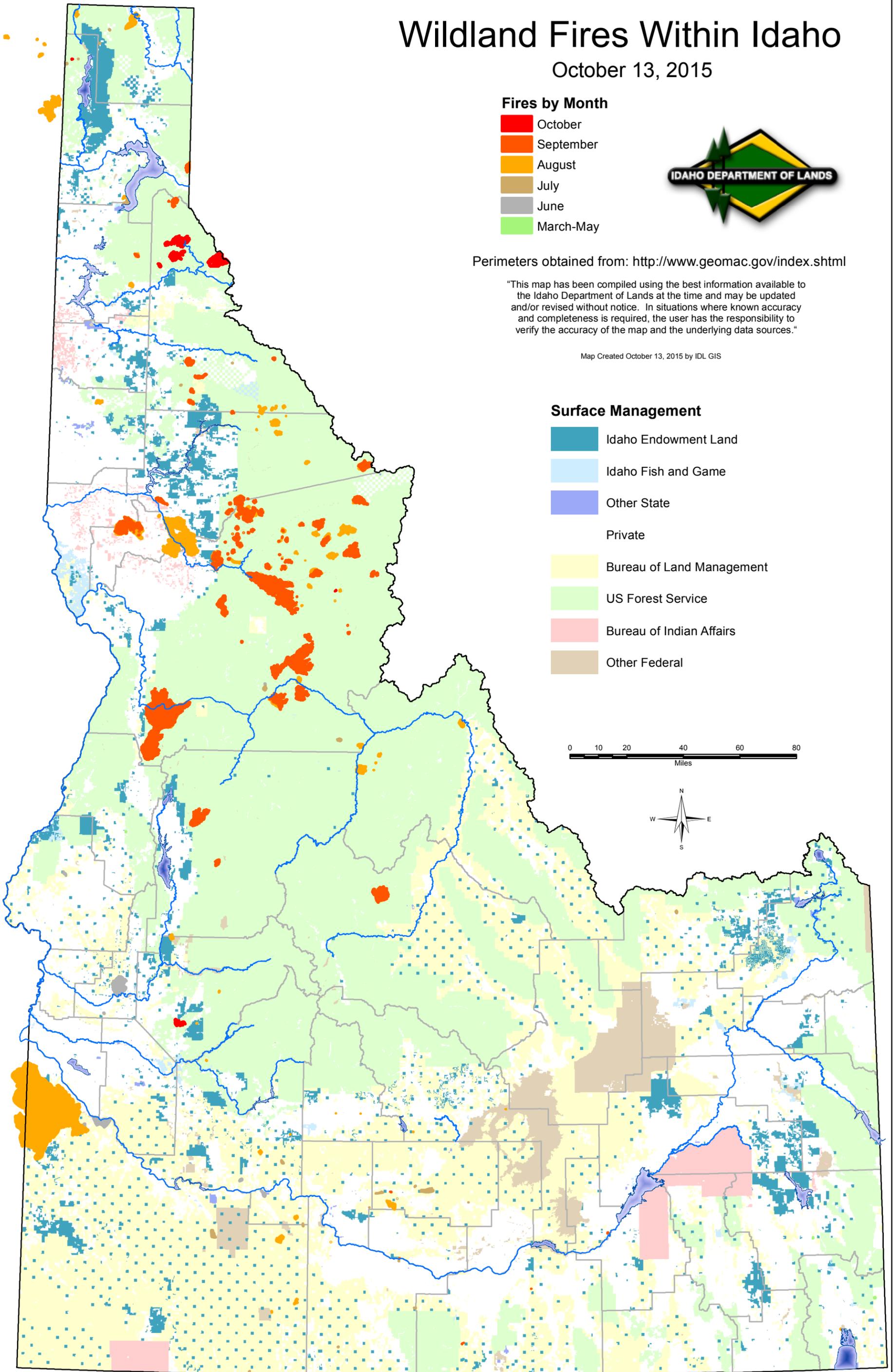
Perimeters obtained from: <http://www.geomac.gov/index.shtml>

"This map has been compiled using the best information available to the Idaho Department of Lands at the time and may be updated and/or revised without notice. In situations where known accuracy and completeness is required, the user has the responsibility to verify the accuracy of the map and the underlying data sources."

Map Created October 13, 2015 by IDL GIS

Surface Management

- Idaho Endowment Land
- Idaho Fish and Game
- Other State
- Private
- Bureau of Land Management
- US Forest Service
- Bureau of Indian Affairs
- Other Federal





2015 Fire Season Estimated Statewide Acres Burned, by Ownership

As of Tuesday, October 13, 2015

LAND OWNER	Acres
Bureau of Land Management	230,000
Bureau of Reclamation	2,000
Idaho Dept of Lands	28,000
Bureau of Indian Affairs	11,000
Other	1,000
Private	119,000
US Forest Service	348,000

Total reported acres burned in Idaho to date = 739,000

*As reported by Geomac on 10/13/2015 at 0900
Includes 2,830-acre Walker Fire*



Funding Wildfire Suppression in Idaho

Prepared by the Idaho Department of Lands, Updated October 2015

Members of the Idaho Legislature requested information from the Idaho Department of Lands (IDL) during the 2015 legislative session showing how western states compare in their mechanisms for paying for state fire programs, including suppression costs. This report was updated in October 2015.

Background

How is fire response organized in Idaho?

There are approximately 53.5 million acres of land in Idaho, which is divided into 16 forest protective districts. Two of these districts cover lands protected by the Forest Service and the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), and two are tribal districts. The State of Idaho – the Department of Lands and two timber protective associations – provide direct wildfire protection on approximately 6.3 million acres of private, state and some federal forest lands.

Due to the scattered nature of ownership in Idaho, some state and private lands are located within federal protection areas, while some federal lands are located within state protection areas. These are known as “offset acres.” Fire managers assign a relative value to each acre to characterize how easily fires can be ignited and how difficult those fires likely will be to control. Through an “offset agreement” the federal agencies protect approximately 900,000 acres of private and state endowment land around Idaho in exchange for the State of Idaho protecting approximately 800,000 acres of federal land. Generally speaking, forested lands in Idaho are included in the offset agreement and rangelands in Idaho are not included the offset agreement.

More than 200 local and rural fire districts provide structure protection in generally non-urban parts of the state that would otherwise not have structural fire protection.

Six rangeland fire protection associations assist the BLM in providing initial attack on rangelands in southern Idaho.

Attachment 1 shows a map of forest protection district boundaries along with locations of IDL resources around the state.

Comparing Models of Fire Suppression Funding

Federal Government

The Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement Act (FLAME) of 2009 established a fund intended to cover wildfire suppression costs incurred on lands that receive wildfire protection from federal agencies. However, Congress has not appropriated enough money to fully implement the FLAME Act, resulting in money being taken from Department of Interior and USDA budgets, namely grants and program funding intended for land management activities. There is an effort by some members of Congress to fully fund the 10-year historic average of suppression expenditures under the FLAME Act and then use the Federal Emergency Management Agency emergency fund if suppression costs exceed the funded amount.

State of Idaho

Fire protection funding is grouped into two categories – preparedness and suppression.

- Preparedness: The first is preparedness, providing resources to be ready in advance of an actual fire. This includes hiring firefighters, ensuring they have the necessary training, tools, and supplies, and purchasing or leasing equipment such as fire engines.

Preparedness on state-protected lands is funded by a combination of assessments levied on parties who own forested land, federal funds, and the State General Fund.

The forest land assessment is 60 cents per acre with a surcharge for forested parcels with structures. The IDL, in its role as the owner of endowment lands, contributes to preparedness expenses, just like private forest landowners. In FY15 IDL contributed 60 cents per acre on 974,312 endowment acres that receive protection from the fire management function of IDL, for a total of \$584,587.

In recognition that the value Idahoans place on forests is not limited to harvestable timber, Idaho Code spreads the costs of protection beyond timber. While still requiring forest landowners to provide protection, the law limits the potential liability accruing to the landowner by establishing maximum protection assessments and committing general fund tax revenue to cover expenses over that amount.

- Suppression: The second component of wildfire protection is suppression. When personnel and equipment are dispatched to a fire managed by the State of Idaho, payment for resources assigned to the fire is made from the General Fund through deficiency warrant authority granted by the Idaho Legislature to the State Board of Land Commissioners. Contracts for aircraft also are charged to deficiency warrants. Deficiency warrant authority allows IDL to spend money to promptly suppress wildfires. Deficiency warrants have been used since at least the early 1970s.

In 2009, IDL changed its budgeting process from tracking suppression costs based on fire season (or calendar year) to tracking suppression costs based on fiscal year (July 1 to June 30). The change gave state officials several more months before the start of the legislative session to know the deficiency warrant amount that IDL would request that session, providing more predictability in the budgeting process. When the Idaho Legislature convenes in January it appropriates funds equal to the Deficiency Fund shortage on June 30 of the previous fiscal year.

If a fire starts on forest land in Idaho, regardless of ownership (federal, state, or private), the protection agency (Forest Service, BLM or IDL) is responsible for paying the suppression bill, not the owner of the land where the fire starts or burns. However, if a fire investigator determines negligence is a factor in igniting a human-caused fire, the responsible party is responsible for paying the suppression costs.

If a fire starts on privately owned rangeland, then the responding agency (BLM, rangeland fire protection association, rural fire district, or sometimes the Forest Service) bears the cost of its own suppression action. In cases involving declared emergencies, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) may cover a portion of the costs if communities or infrastructure are threatened. The State of Idaho does not have direct wildfire protection responsibility on rangelands.

Currently by agreement, if a fire starts on rangeland owned by the State of Idaho, does not spread to another ownership and is suppressed by the BLM, then the IDL will pay the suppression costs. If a fire starts on rangeland owned by the State of Idaho and spreads to another ownership, then IDL will pay a pro-rata share of the BLM's suppression costs. The IDL does not share in suppression costs when a fire starts on another ownership and spreads onto or across rangeland owned by the State of Idaho.

While IDL does incur fire suppression costs when the State of Idaho assists federal fire managers on fires they manage, the federal agencies reimburse IDL for use of State personnel and resources.

State of Idaho (IDL) 2015 fire suppression costs are estimated to be 72,350,000 with \$17,902,000 in reimbursable expenses for a net obligation of \$54,448,000, as of Oct. 6, 2015.

State of Oregon¹

The Oregon Department of Forestry (ODF) protects 16.1 million acres of private and public forestland.

According to the ODF web site, multiple sources fund the work of ODF's Fire Protection Division, which includes **fire prevention** and **education** as well as **firefighting**.

- Forest landowners pay a **Forest Patrol Assessment** to the state. The state's General Fund matches the landowners' portion.
- The **Oregon Forest Land Protection Fund (OFLPF)** helps pay for additional aircraft, heavy equipment and personnel when large fires require resources beyond the capability of ODF field districts. The OFLPF is funded entirely by landowners.
- During extreme fire conditions, ODF seeks access to a **legislative special-purpose appropriation (SPA)** to obtain additional firefighting resources. The SPA dollars come from the state's General Fund. Grants through various federal programs provide additional support.
- A **private insurance policy** helps cover firefighting expenses when all other funding sources have been expended.

There are three layers in the state's fire protection funding: Base, severity, and large fire.

Base protection funding ensures prevention, readiness, and initial attack response at the local district level. That cost has mostly been shared equally by private landowners and the state since 1991. *Severity resources* include retardant- and water-dropping aircraft that can be placed where the immediate or projected threat is highest. Severity resources are supported by a special purpose appropriation of state funds matched 40/60 with landowner funds from the Oregon Forestland Protection Fund (OFLPF). Landowner assessments and harvest taxes provide revenues to support the OFLPF. *Large Fire Protection* costs are covered through a mix of state and landowner funds, plus an insurance policy.

1. **Base Protection** – ODF's base protection program is delivered through local Forest Protection Districts. Revenue to support the district budgets comes from a combination of General Fund and forest patrol assessments on local private forest landowners. The obligation is established in statute, which provides that the landowners' share may not exceed 50%. Forest patrol assessments charged against subject landowners on a per-acre basis vary by district, as each local budget is developed independently. Public landowners, such as state agencies and the Bureau of Land Management, receive no General Fund match and pay the full cost of their fire protection.

¹ Information derived from the ODF web site at <http://www.oregon.gov/ODF/Fire/Pages/default.aspx> and "Forestry Protection from Fire Funding" Budget Information Brief 2014-4, available at <https://www.oregonlegislature.gov/lfo/Documents/2014-4FireProtectionFunding.pdf>

State of Oregon 2015 total fire suppression costs are \$76.5 million (from personal correspondence with ODF staff on Oct. 14, 2015).

2. **Severity Resources** – These resources, primarily aviation, are critical in preventing small fires from growing into large, costly fires. General Fund and landowners share equally in funding this \$6 million/year layer of protection. Of the total, \$1 million General Fund per year provides assessment relief for fire protection on lower productivity lands that are more expensive to protect. The remaining \$2 million General Fund and \$3 million OFLPF funding provides rapid-response resources during periods of multiple fire starts and heightened fire danger. Prior to 2013, the total amount for this purpose was \$2 million General Fund per year. The state’s share of severity resource funding is appropriated to the Emergency Board and allocated to the Department of Forestry after each fire season.
3. **Large Fire Protection** – Large fire protection pays for emergency suppression costs. Enabling legislation is based on the policy of equalizing emergency fire suppression costs on all forest lands protected by the state; no single district is required to pay the full amount of firefighting expenses. Funding for emergency costs is provided by General Fund and by the OFLPF, which is administered by the statutorily authorized Emergency Fire Costs Committee, appointed by the Board of Forestry. There is no state budget for large fires because these fires are unpredictable. When large fires occur, costs are met by the Emergency Fund, General Fund, or other state resources.

The OFLPF annual large fire costs are capped at \$10 million. Expenditures from the fund are triggered when a forest protection district meets a spending level based on acreage and cost thresholds. Over the next three biennia, the cost-share scheme shifts an increasing portion of the large fire costs to the state, ultimately resulting in a dollar-for-dollar split up to \$20 million in annual costs. This portion of funding, up to \$20 million total per year, is considered the deductible for the state’s fire insurance. With the final shift expected in the 2017-19 biennium, the fire protection system will reflect a 50/50 sharing through all three levels of the fire protection funding framework.

If costs exceed \$20 million, insurance provides up to \$25 million more. The annual premium is shared equally between the state General Fund and the OFLPF.

The state is responsible for any costs that exceed the sum of the \$20 million deductible and the \$25 million insurance payout. These costs are also not included in the Department of Forestry budget and must be paid from state resources, as needed. Since 1973, costs have exceeded the deductible plus insurance coverage twice – in 1987 and in 2013.

State of Washington²

The State of Washington provides wildland fire protection on 5.2 million acres.

The Resource Protection Division within the Washington Department of Natural Resources has three major wildfire budget programs: fire control (sometimes referred to as “preparedness”), fire regulation/prevention, and emergency fire suppression.

- **Fire Control/Preparedness:** The fire control program involves fire preparedness and pre-suppression activities that include planning, systematic dispatch, fire equipment development and maintenance, DNR employee training, and accountability. It also includes all cooperative fire planning with other agencies, fire detection activities, and related fire weather activities. This program includes all activities pertaining to the Forest Fire Protection Assessment statute. It essentially includes everything DNR does to be prepared to respond to a wildfire when a fire is detected or reported. This program has been primarily supported in the past by the state’s General Fund, landowner assessments, and federal funds including State Fire Assistance monies.
- **Fire Regulation/Prevention:** Fire regulation/prevention is divided into several activities. Under fire regulation, DNR issues permits for silvicultural burning, enforces pertinent laws and rules, administers the Industrial Fire Precaution Level system, and carries out the smoke management program. The fire regulation program provides assistance to local fire districts and also provides regulation and protection services and activities supported by federal grants. Prevention includes all costs related to providing services identified in DNR regional fire prevention plans. The program has been primarily supported in the past by the state’s General Fund, landowner assessments, air pollution funding, and federal funds including State Fire Assistance and other grant monies.
- **Fire Suppression:** The Emergency Fire Suppression program represents all fire response activities that the DNR manages using the Incident Command System (ICS). A three-digit alpha fire project number assigned by the dispatcher is required when charging to Emergency Fire Suppression Programs. Activities include dispatching resources to fires, including those started by participating landowner operations, and fighting fires. It also includes origin and cause determination and other investigative activities that the DNR conducts during the early phases of a fire as well as activities for extended fire investigations when legal action is being considered. False alarms and standby activities are included when authorized by the Resource Protection Division in advance. Fire suppression also includes mobilizing and pre-positioning DNR fire engine crews, DNR agency hand crews, overhead, and other resources in response to predicted fire danger. The DNR monitors the fire danger each day using a variety of information and predictive services and sources including the Northwest Interagency Coordination Center (NWCC). This program has been supported in the past by the state’s General Fund, the Landowner Contingency Forest Fire Suppression Account, disaster funding, and federal funds including State Fire Assistance monies.

2 Information derived from “Wildfire Suppression Cost Study” published by the Washington State Institute for Public Policy, January 2013, available at <http://www.wsipp.wa.gov/Reports/13-01-4101>

State of Washington (DNR) 2015 fire suppression costs are estimated to be \$100 million (from personal correspondence with ODF staff on Oct. 14, 2015.)

State of Montana³

There are various sources of funding used to pay for the state's two components of wildland fire administration: wildland fire *preparedness* and wildland fire *suppression*.

- ***Preparedness***: Section 76-13, Part 2, MCA, establishes the responsibility of owners of classified forested land to provide wildland fire protection for their property and establishes the process by which landowners agree to pay for state fire protection. An assessment process currently generates approximately one-third (1/3) of DNRC's appropriated budget for its fire protection program. The assessment amount is statutorily limited and proceeds are placed in a state special revenue fund.

More than 50,000 landowners in 33 counties pay a minimum of \$30 per ownership for less than 20 acres and an additional \$0.19 per acre for ownerships greater than 20 acres. This generated approximately \$3.5 million of the \$11 million annual preparedness budget. The remainder of the preparedness budget is provided by the state General Fund and some federal funds.

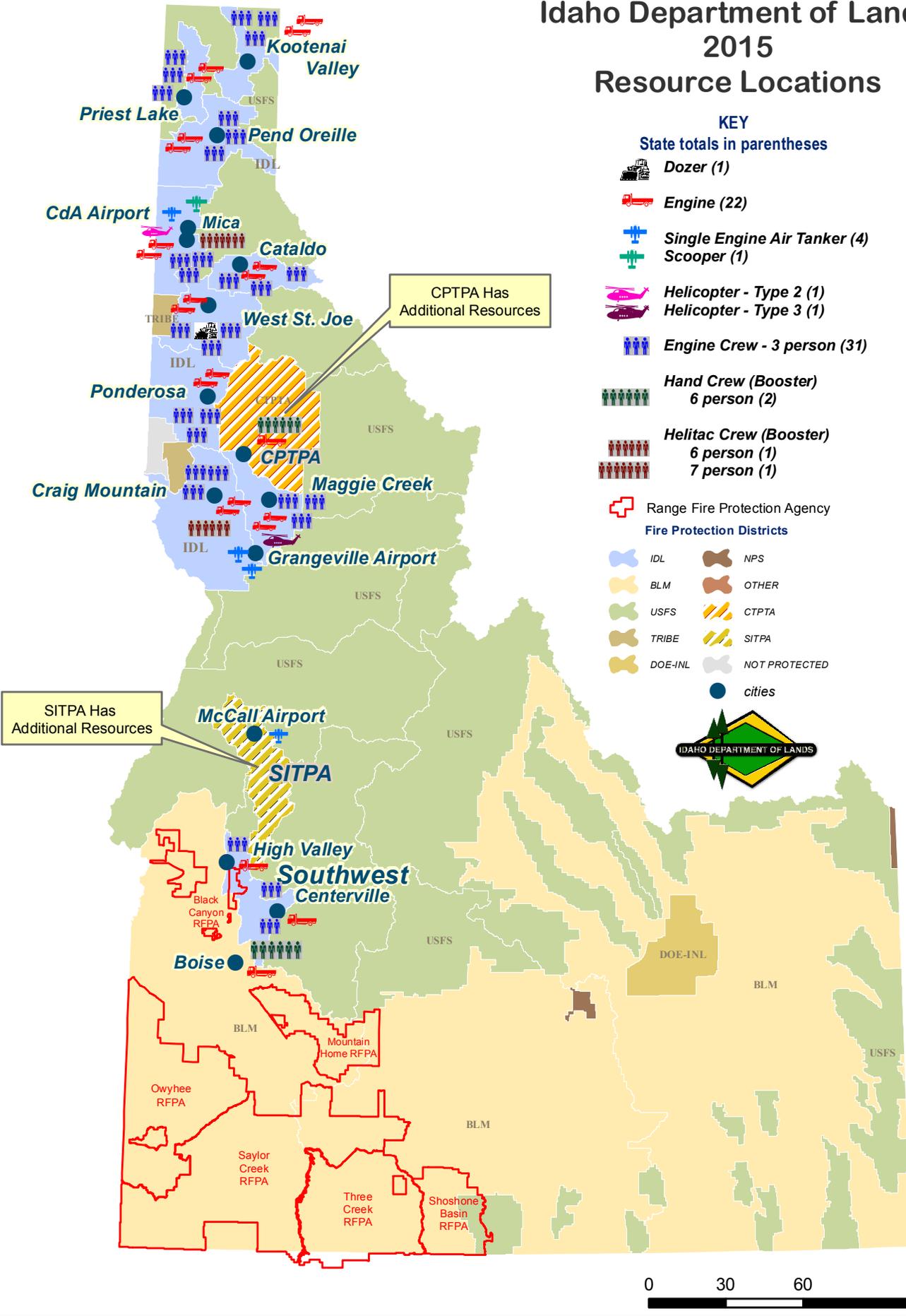
- ***Suppression***: A law passed in 2013 changed how the state pays for its fire suppression costs. A dedicated fire suppression fund was established using money from excess corporate license or income tax revenues; budget reversions; leftover appropriations for fire suppression costs and other unanticipated funding; and money not spent in a fund that pays for emergency response. Money not spent in the account is rolled over to the next year. The fund is capped at \$100 million, and any excess money beyond that goes to the state general fund. The current balance of the wildfire suppression fund is \$43 million.

Enclosed:

Attachment 1 – Map: Forest protection district boundaries along with locations of IDL resources around the state

³ Information derived from 2004 Legislative Audit of Montana Wildland Fire Administration, available at <http://leg.mt.gov/content/Publications/Audit/Report/04P-11.pdf> and August 19, 2013, article in the Missoulian titled, "New law changes how state of Montana funds wildfire suppression," available at http://missoulian.com/news/local/new-law-changes-how-state-of-montana-funds-wildfire-suppression/article_9b0816a0-0872-11e3-b151-0019bb2963f4.html

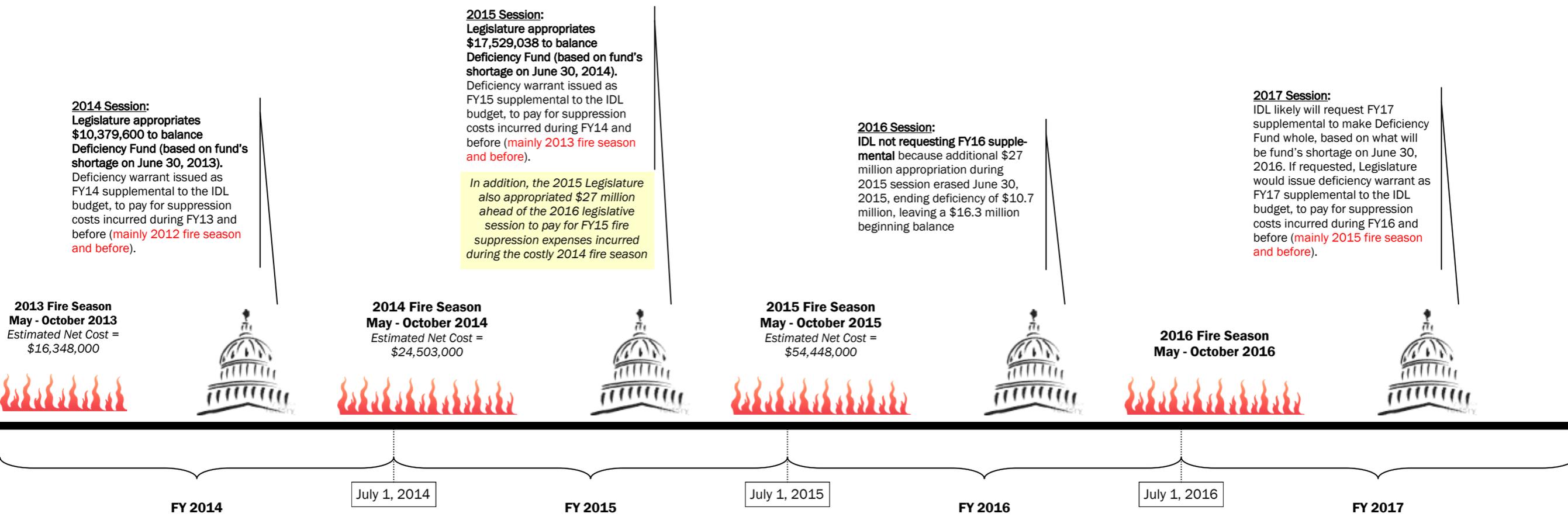
Idaho Department of Lands 2015 Resource Locations



SITPA Has Additional Resources

CPTPA Has Additional Resources

Fire Suppression Funding in Idaho Deficiency Warrant Authority



The State of Idaho pays for its fire suppression costs through the Deficiency Fund. Payment is made from the General Fund through deficiency warrant authority granted by the Idaho Legislature to the Land Board. Deficiency warrant authority allows IDL to spend money to promptly suppress wildfires. Deficiency warrants have been used since at least the early 1970s.

The State of Idaho assists federal agencies in fighting fires within their protection areas by providing State of Idaho fire personnel and resources; IDL is reimbursed for providing this assistance. Similarly, federal agencies assist the State of Idaho in fighting fire within our protection areas by providing federal fire personnel and resources; the federal agencies bill IDL for providing their assistance.

It can take two years or more for IDL to receive bills from federal agencies for assistance they provided us on fires we managed. Therefore, the amount the Legislature pays every year to balance the Deficiency Fund does not correlate with one single fire season; it correlates with costs incurred for fire suppression during the previous fiscal year and before or, put another way, two fire seasons ago and before. However, the estimated cost of a single fire season may indicate whether the amount the Legislature pays in the future will increase or decrease.

Estimated Fire Season Costs "Net obligation" to State of Idaho General Fund ONLY		Past Deficiency Warrants Appropriated to IDL as a supplemental budget item every year	
2013 Fire Season	\$16,348,000	\$17,529,000	FY15 Supplemental (equal to Deficiency Fund shortage on June 30, 2014)
2012 Fire Season	\$13,542,000	\$10,379,600	FY14 Supplemental (equal to Deficiency Fund shortage on June 30, 2013)
2011 Fire Season	\$3,268,000	\$6,013,200	FY13 Supplemental (equal to Deficiency Fund shortage on June 30, 2012)
2010 Fire Season	\$6,336,000	\$4,093,300	FY12 Supplemental (equal to Deficiency Fund shortage on June 30, 2011)

State of Idaho Fire Responsibilities

The State of Idaho (10 IDL forest protective districts and two timber protective associations) together protect 6.3 million acres of land in Idaho from wildfire. Most of the lands we protect are located north of Riggins and are mostly privately-owned and State-owned. However, our protection areas do include approximately 800,000 acres of forested federal land. In exchange, the federal agencies protect approximately 900,000 of forested private and State endowment land around Idaho.