

**SOUTHERN AREA REGIONAL COORDINATING GROUP OPERATING PLAN  
USFS AGREEMENT #24-IA-11083150-003**

**SOUTHERN AREA REGIONAL COORDINATION GROUP OPERATING PLAN**

**FOR INTERAGENCY AGREEMENT  
NUMBER**

**24-IA-11083150-003**

**Between**

**THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**

**Forest Service**

(Region 8) UEI: G2EGL5TJE6N3

**THE UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**National Park Service**

(Region 1, Region 2, Region 3/4/5, Region 6/7/8) UEI: ZK1LYM6WE3C4

**Fish and Wildlife Service**

(Region 2, Region 4, Region 5) UEI: MYTDK1R5BBQ6

**Bureau of Indian Affairs**

(Southern Plains Region, Eastern Region, Eastern Oklahoma Region) UEI: FAEQN3LV59K3

**Bureau of Land Management**

(Eastern States) UEI: LWKLJKSQQA8

This Operating Plan is hereby made and entered into by and between the parties pursuant to the Interagency Agreement (FS Agreement # **24-IA-11083150-002**) signed and dated **03-01-2024**. This Operating Plan, inclusive of any referenced attachments or exhibits, is tiered to the Agreement. A formal modification to the Agreement is unnecessary but shall not contradict the Agreement.

**I. PURPOSE**

This is the Southern Area Regional Coordination Operating Plan applicable to all signatory parties within Southern Area. Its purpose is to set forth agreed upon services to be provided between the federal and state wildland fire management agencies within the Southern Area.

1. This plan covers, but is not limited to, the use of agency owned, leased or contract fixed and rotary wing aircraft; cooperative use, funding, administration and contracting of airtankers and helicopters; Southern Area Incident Management Teams, Prescribed Fire and other non-fire activities.
2. This action plan provides for each agency's responsibilities in meeting its share of the cooperative effort.
3. This plan will not be construed as a binding document upon each agency should funds not be appropriated by the Congress of the United States.
4. This plan will be revalidated at an annual winter SACG meeting of each year.
5. Since each Agency mutually benefits from this Agreement, administrative costs will not be exchanged, except as required by individual Agency regulation. In the event Agencies are required to bill for administrative costs, each providing Agency shall charge administrative costs in kind.

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**II. AVIATION**

**A. Airtankers**

1. The Forest Service contracts Very Large (VLAT's) and Large Airtankers (LAT's) that may be located at Airtanker bases in Chattanooga, TN; Lake City, FL; and locations with Portable Airtanker Base Trailers (PAB) on as needed bases.
2. These Airtankers are available for interagency use throughout the Southern States, National Parks, Fish and Wildlife Refuges, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management and National Forests under the priorities listed in the Southern Interagency mobilization guide.
3. Financing of Airtankers
  - a) Forest Service will pay for availability of airtankers.
  - b) National Park Service funds the airtanker base manager located at Chattanooga, TN.
  - c) Each Agency may provide detailers and funding per incident at Airtanker Base; and other Portable Retardant Bases, on as needed basis.

**B. Helicopters**

1. The Forest Service has contracts for twenty-one helicopters to be used within the Southern Area.
2. The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service has an agency-owned helicopter based at Leesburg, Florida.
3. The National Park Service has one agency-owned helicopter based at Big Cypress National Preserve. They also contract one, based at Everglades National Park.
4. Agencies can share these assets as needed, based on availability and mutual coordination.

**C. Agency Aircraft and Pilots**

1. When an Agency owns or leases aircraft for personnel transport, cargo, photography, fire, and other uses, these aircraft and pilots are available for interagency use. The using agency will pay an hourly use rate, plus pilot's overtime and per diem. No administrative costs will be exchanged. Payment for aircraft use may include daily Fixed Overhead Rate (FOR), hourly use rate and pilot's per diem and overtime. Flight scheduling is through the Southern Area Coordination Center (SACC) Aircraft Desk.
2. Pilot travel, per diem and overtime will be paid by benefiting agency. Request for pilot services will be made through the normal dispatch channels.

**D. Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS)**

1. Unmanned Aerial Systems (UAS) shall be conducted in accordance with each Agency's aviation rules, policies, and directives; applicable Federal Aviation Regulations (FAR's), and Public Law 103-411, the Independent Safety Board Act Amendments of 1994, which amended 49 U.S.C. Sec. 101, 1118, 1131, 40102, and 40109 and Public Law 105-137 the Aviation Insurance Reauthorization Act of 1997, which amended 49 U.S.C. Sec. 40101, 40102, 44302, 44305, 44306, 44308, and 44310.

**III. CREWS**

**A. Interagency Hotshot Crews**

1. The Southern Area Hosts Four Interagency Hotshot Crews:
  - a. Asheville Interagency Hotshot Crew, USFS, headquartered at Asheville, NC. The mission of the Asheville Hotshots is to offer enhanced leadership training opportunities to challenge individuals in a Type 1 crew setting. The crew is generally available January

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through May each year.

- b. Augusta Interagency Hotshot Crew, USFS, headquartered at Augusta Springs, VA. The crew is generally available mid-March through October each year.
- c. Cherokee Interagency Hotshot Crew, USFS, headquartered at Unicoi, TN. The crew is generally available March through October each year.
- d. Jackson Interagency Hotshot Crew, BLM, headquartered at Jackson, MS. The crew is generally available April through mid-September each year.

**IV. SOUTHERN AREA INCIDENT MANAGEMENT TEAMS**

- A. The SACG provides oversight to the Southern Area Incident Management Teams. SACG is responsible for determining the appropriate numbers and types of teams for the Southern Area.
- B. The SACG selects Incident Commanders (IC's) for the teams and participates in the selection of team members.
- C. The agencies included in SACG provide funding in support of the Incident management teams.

**V. PRESCRIBED FIRE AND NON-FIRE INCIDENTS**

- A. The agencies signatory to this agreement may share resources for Prescribed Fire through separate Service First Interagency Agreements (IA) between the 2 cooperating agencies addressing the exchange of funds.
- B. The agencies signatory to this agreement may share resources for non-fire use, such as Law Enforcement, Search and Rescue, Natural Disasters, Pest Control, etc., through separate Service First IAs between the 2 cooperating agencies addressing the exchange of funds.

**VI. FUNDING**

- A. The Southern Area Regional Coordinating Financial Plan will be approved annually. The next fiscal year budget will be submitted to and approved by SACG prior to March 15<sup>th</sup> annually.
- B. The plan will include contributions by each agency and the purpose of contributions.
- C. Financial obligations of each contributing agency are payable for the upcoming year.
- D. Transfer of funds will be conducted using the Interagency Agreement (IA) mechanism.
- E. Specific contribution amounts and breakdowns are listed in the Southern Area Regional Coordinating Financial Plan.

**VII. AGENCY OFFICERS**

SACG members are delegated responsibility for carrying out this Agreement by their administrators. Those individuals will review, modify, and approve the Operating Plan by close of business at the annual winter SACG meeting.

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**IN WITNESS WHEREOF**, the Parties hereto have executed this Agreement as of the last date written below:

**USDOI FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
REGION 2**

**for**

**USDOI FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
REGION 4**

**USDOI FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE  
REGION 5**



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PITCHFORD  
Date: 2023.11.30 14:03:41 -05'00'

Acting Regional Director

Date: 11/30/2023

**USDOI NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
REGION 1**

**USDOI NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
REGION 2**

**USDOI NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
REGION 3/4/5**

**USDOI NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
REGION 6/7/8**

**MARK FOUST**

Digitally signed by MARK FOUST  
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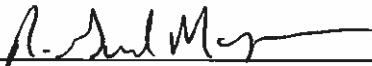
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Regional Director, Interior Region 2

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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**USDOJ BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
SOUTHERN PLAINS REGION**

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Director

Date: **FEB 21 2024**  
\_\_\_\_\_

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USDOJ BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
EASTERN REGION


  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Regional Director

Date: 10/27/23

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**USDOJ BUREAU OF INDIAN AFFAIRS  
EASTERN OKLAHOMA REGION**

**EDDIE  
STREATER**

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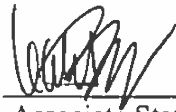
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Regional Director

Date: \_\_\_\_\_



**USDOJ BUREAU OF LAND MANAGEMENT  
EASTERN STATES**



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\_\_\_\_\_  
Associate State Director

Date: 2023 NOV 30

**SOUTHERN AREA REGIONAL COORDINATING GROUP OPERATING PLAN  
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**USDA FOREST SERVICE  
REGION 8**

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Director, Grants and Agreements

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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Date: 2023.10.20 12:09:50 -05'00'

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U.S. Forest Service Grants Management Specialist

Date: 10/20/2023