

October 11, 2024

Randy Moore
Chief
U.S. Forest Service
Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, DC 20250

Dear Chief Moore,

As wildfires continue to burn across Montana and the west, I urge the Forest Service to be more transparent about wildfire management strategy goals and actions. Communities that border National Forest System lands follow reports on nearby wildfires and their management closely as their lives and homes could be in danger from rapidly moving wildfires. Additionally, when large fires are spread across multiple jurisdictions, it is important that the wildfire management strategy is clear to all collaborating state and local firefighting partners.

The longer fire season means that wildfires are far from over as the country remains at National Preparedness Level 5 with 30 large active wildfires currently burning. With firefighters stretched thin, communities know that suppression strategies will vary to fit the unique circumstances of each wildfire and the level of risk those wildfires pose to communities and the firefighters battling them. But transparency remains key to this understanding. State and local firefighting partners and communities rely on the Forest Service to be open and clear about the strategy. In your 2024 Letter of intent for wildland fires, you acknowledge that the “most effective strategies are collaboratively carried out at the local level” and it is critical to hold your agency to this ideal.¹

At a minimum, transparency requires that terminology be accurate and well defined. The Master Cooperative Agreement between Montana, the Forest Service, and other federal agencies lays out the many different fire management strategies that could be used in the state of Montana.² These strategies range from “full suppression” to “monitor” the wildfire. Full suppression is defined as:

A strategy to “put the fire out,” as efficiently and effectively as possible, while providing for firefighter and public safety. To complete a Fireline around a fire to halt fire spread and cool down all hot spots that are immediate threats to control line, or outside the perimeter, until the lines can reasonably be expected to hold under foreseeable conditions. Full suppression is synonymous with “Full Perimeter Control” and “Control.”

This definition is clear and leaves no room for confusion between partners. However, I am aware of ongoing concerns that the Forest Service is not being transparent with state partners and the public about which wildfire management strategies are being used. This includes whether fire monitoring is considered part of full suppression or if one wildfire can be split into different

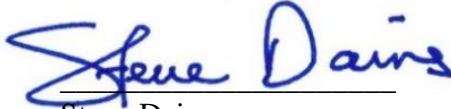
¹ [2024 Letter of intent for wildland fires](#)

² [MONTANA MASTER COOPERATIVE WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT AND STAFFORD ACT RESPONSE AGREEMENT](#)

management strategies for different sections of the wildfire. Neither of these two alternatives are addressed in the Master Cooperative Agreement so this concern is understandable. It is important for continued firefighting efforts to address these concerns quickly and comprehensively.

I urge you to direct Forest Service leaders to be transparent to the communities and partners across the west about how the Forest Service is managing wildfires. Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Steve Daines". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a horizontal line drawn underneath the name.

Steve Daines
United States Senator