

# PRESS RELEASE

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IDAHO SECRETARY OF STATE

## **Let's Protect our Lands this July Fourth – Help Prevent Wildfires!**

**By Phil McGrane, Secretary of State and Land Board Member**

Boise, ID – With the Fourth of July upon us, we celebrate our nation's independence and enjoy the beauty of our great state. For many of us, this means venturing into Idaho's public lands for activities like camping, hiking, and gathering around campfires with family and friends. However, in order to enjoy our lands, we must protect them.

The beginning of July also marks National Wildland Firefighter Day, Sunday, July 2. As we celebrate Independence Day, I encourage all Idahoans to also pause to recognize the sacrifice firefighters make on our behalf and to join me in working to reduce the risk of wildfires when enjoying our public lands this season.

As a member of the Idaho Land Board, I recently had the incredible opportunity to spend a week training with the Idaho Department of Lands firefighters, joining the brave men and women who take on our forests' most fearsome foe, wildfire. The experience profoundly impacted my perspective on our state's wildfire challenges and the importance of protecting our state's precious natural resources.

With the onset of warmer weather comes an increased risk of wildfires that can devastate our forests, wildlife, and homes. To earn my Red Card, which qualifies me to access the frontlines of Idaho wildfires, I joined wildland firefighting recruits to learn about fire behavior, weather, safety protocols, and practiced digging a line to stop a controlled blaze. I got to experience just how hard our wildland firefighters work and to see just how quickly these fires can consume what we cherish.

Each year, about 70% of wildfires on state and private land in Idaho are human-caused. That is why it is incumbent upon each one of us to take proactive steps to protect our state.

Preventing wildfires starts with being responsible and thoughtful when recreating. This means practicing safe campfire practices, ensuring safety chains do not drag, properly disposing of cigarette butts, and never leaving a fire unattended. It is also important to check fire restrictions before heading out and to follow them closely. These restrictions are put in place to protect our forests and communities and ignoring them can have serious consequences for our forests and wallets. Idaho spends \$20 - \$70 million each summer fighting wildfires. That's tax dollars that could be saved, or worse; you could be on the hook for a fire you inadvertently caused.

As Secretary of State and a member of the Land Board, I pledged to protect our public lands so that we, and future generations, can benefit from all they have to offer. As Idahoans, we all have a responsibility to protect our public lands and the natural beauty that makes our state so special. By being mindful of the risks of wildfires and taking steps to prevent them, we can all do our part to ensure that our forests and communities are safe and healthy for generations to come.

To learn more about campfire safety and fire restrictions in your favorite recreation area, visit the Idaho Department of Lands website at <https://www.idl.idaho.gov/fire-management/>.

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### **ABOUT PHIL McGRANE**

*Phil McGrane is Idaho's Secretary of State, serves on the Idaho Land Board, and was recently certified as a wildland firefighter. The Land Board oversees the management of nearly 2.5 million acres of endowment land managed by the Idaho Department of Lands to generate revenue for our public schools, colleges and universities, veterans' homes, and other beneficiaries as required by the Idaho Constitution. More than 96% of endowment land is accessible to the public for recreation. Idaho Department of Lands is also responsible for the fire protection of approximately 9 million acres of private, state, and federal lands.*