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(Original Signature of Member)

119TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. _____

To provide for the establishment of regional wildland fire research centers,
and for other purposes.

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Mr. MIN introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee
on _____

A BILL

To provide for the establishment of regional wildland fire
research centers, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 **SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.**

4 This Act may be cited as the “Regional Leadership
5 in Wildland Fire Research Act of 2025”.

6 **SEC. 2. DEFINITIONS.**

7 In this Act:

1 (1) APPROPRIATE COMMITTEES OF CON-
2 GRESS.—The term “appropriate committees of Con-
3 gress” means—

4 (A) the Committee on Agriculture, Nutri-
5 tion, and Forestry, the Committee on Energy
6 and Natural Resources, and the Committee on
7 Appropriations of the Senate;

8 (B) the Committee on Agriculture, the
9 Committee on Natural Resources, and the Com-
10 mittee on Appropriations of the House of Rep-
11 resentatives; and

12 (C) any other committee of Congress with
13 the authority to facilitate the development of
14 wildland fire research.

15 (2) BOARD.—The term “Board” means the Na-
16 tional Center Coordination Board established by sec-
17 tion 3(c)(1).

18 (3) CAREER PATHWAY.—The term “career
19 pathway” has the meaning given that term in sec-
20 tion 3 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity
21 Act (29 U.S.C. 3102).

22 (4) CHIEF.—The term “Chief” means the Chief
23 of the Forest Service.

24 (5) FEDERAL SCIENCE AGENCY.—The term
25 “Federal science agency” has the meaning given

1 that term in section 103(f) of the America COM-
2 PETES Reauthorization Act of 2010 (42 U.S.C.
3 6623(f)).

4 (6) INDIAN TRIBE.—The term “Indian Tribe”
5 has the meaning given the term in section 4 of the
6 Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance
7 Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

8 (7) INSTITUTION OF HIGHER EDUCATION.—The
9 term “institution of higher education” has the
10 meaning given that term in section 101(a) of the
11 Higher Education Act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1001(a)).

12 (8) LAND-GRANT COLLEGES AND UNIVER-
13 SITIES.—The term “land-grant colleges and univer-
14 sities” has the meaning given that term in section
15 1404 of the National Agricultural Research, Exten-
16 sion, and Teaching Policy Act of 1977 (7 U.S.C.
17 3103).

18 (9) MINORITY-SERVING INSTITUTION.—The
19 term “minority-serving institution” means an insti-
20 tution defined in any of paragraphs (1) through (7)
21 of section 371(a) of the Higher Education Act of
22 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1067q(a)).

23 (10) NATIONAL LABORATORY.—The term “Na-
24 tional Laboratory” has the meaning given that term

1 in section 2 of the Energy Policy Act of 2005 (42
2 U.S.C. 15801).

3 (11) REGIONAL CENTER.—The term “regional
4 center” means a regional wildland fire research cen-
5 ter established under section 3.

6 (12) SECRETARIES.—The term “Secretaries”
7 means the Secretary of Agriculture and the Sec-
8 retary of the Interior.

9 (13) TRIBAL ORGANIZATION.—The term “Trib-
10 al organization” has the meaning given that term in
11 section 4 of the Indian Self-Determination and Edu-
12 cation Assistance Act (25 U.S.C. 5304).

13 (14) WILDLAND FIRE.—The term “wildland
14 fire” means any non-structure fire that occurs in
15 vegetation or natural fuels and includes wildfires
16 originating from an unplanned ignition or prescribed
17 fire.

18 (15) WILDLAND FIRE MANAGEMENT AGEN-
19 CIES.—The term “wildland fire management agen-
20 cies” means—

- 21 (A) the Forest Service;
- 22 (B) the Bureau of Land Management;
- 23 (C) the National Park Service;
- 24 (D) the United States Fish and Wildlife
25 Service; and

1 (E) the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

2 (16) WILDLAND FIRE RESEARCH.—The term
3 “wildland fire research” means research to better
4 understand—

5 (A) the causes and consequences of
6 wildland fires, including antecedent and con-
7 temporaneous factors that increase the risk of
8 catastrophic events;

9 (B) the spread and behavior of wildland
10 fires, including fires in the wildland-urban
11 interface;

12 (C) the efficacy of mitigation strategies for
13 wildland fires;

14 (D) the impact of wildland fires on public
15 health, safety, and the environment;

16 (E) the rehabilitation and restoration of
17 affected ecosystems after wildland fires; and

18 (F) the development of mitigation strate-
19 gies and techniques to improve the safety of
20 wildland fire managers and firefighters.

21 **SEC. 3. ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL WILDLAND FIRE**
22 **RESEARCH CENTERS.**

23 (a) IN GENERAL.—The Secretaries shall establish a
24 competitive process for the selection and establishment of

1 regional wildland fire research centers in accordance with
2 subsection (b).

3 (b) SELECTION AND ESTABLISHMENT OF REGIONAL
4 CENTERS.—

5 (1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretaries shall select
6 not fewer than 8 institutions of higher education or
7 land-grant colleges and universities at which to es-
8 tablish, in accordance with the timeline described in
9 paragraph (2), regional centers to coordinate the de-
10 velopment of wildland fire research.

11 (2) TIMELINE.—In establishing regional centers
12 under paragraph (1), the Secretaries shall estab-
13 lish—

14 (A) as soon as practicable after the date of
15 enactment of this Act, subject to the availability
16 of appropriations, a pilot program under which
17 not fewer than 2 regional centers shall be estab-
18 lished; and

19 (B) not later than 2 years after the date
20 on which the pilot program is established under
21 subparagraph (A), the remaining regional cen-
22 ters.

23 (2) CRITERIA FOR SELECTION.—

24 (A) IN GENERAL.—In establishing a re-
25 gional center at an institution of higher edu-

1 cation or land-grant college or university under
2 this section, the Secretaries shall prioritize the
3 selection of institutions, colleges, or universities
4 that meet not fewer than one of the following
5 criteria:

6 (i) Have existing programs of record
7 in wildland fire research.

8 (ii) Have existing partnerships with
9 research institutions of the Federal Gov-
10 ernment and other academic institutions
11 and entities relating to wildland fire re-
12 search.

13 (iii) Participate in or lead a program
14 under the Joint Fire Science Program.

15 (iv) Are a minority-serving institution.

16 (B) REGIONS.—The Secretaries shall es-
17 tablish not fewer than 1 regional center in each
18 of the following regions of the United States, as
19 defined by the Secretaries:

20 (i) Alaska.

21 (ii) California.

22 (iii) The Pacific Northwest.

23 (iv) The Pacific Islands.

24 (v) The Plains and Northeast.

25 (vi) The Rockies.

1 (vii) The Southeast.

2 (viii) The Southwest.

3 (3) PURPOSE.—Each regional center, with re-
4 spect to the region covered by the regional center,
5 shall—

6 (A) to the extent practical, coordinate re-
7 search with other wildland fire research entities,
8 such as other academic institutions, the Envi-
9 ronmental Protection Agency, the National Oce-
10 anic and Atmospheric Administration, the Na-
11 tional Science Foundation, the National Aero-
12 nautics and Space Administration, the Depart-
13 ment of Energy, the research and development
14 program of the Forest Service, the National
15 Laboratories, the United States Geological Sur-
16 vey, and State and regional research organiza-
17 tions;

18 (B) improve the understanding of wildland
19 fire through wildland fire research that can be
20 applied by wildland fire management agencies;

21 (C) develop technologies and other tools to
22 understand, monitor, and predict wildland fire,
23 including—

1 (i) models to predict fire potential and
2 the spread and behavior of wildland fire
3 and smoke;

4 (ii) models to predict how vegetation
5 will respond to changes in the environment
6 and wildland fire;

7 (iii) the integration of technologies to
8 predict the spread and behavior of wildland
9 fire and smoke in as near-real-time as pos-
10 sible; and

11 (iv) other innovations to be integrated
12 into operational decision support systems
13 relating to wildland fire, such as the
14 Wildland Fire Decision Support System
15 and the Interagency Fuel Treatment Deci-
16 sion Support System;

17 (D) develop technologies and other tools to
18 safely support land management activities to re-
19 duce the severity of wildland fire;

20 (E) leverage predictive capabilities to re-
21 duce the impact of smoke on communities and
22 wildfire incident management teams, including
23 wildland firefighters;

1 (F) improve the understanding of post-fire
2 risk to the landscape, including flash flooding
3 potential and watershed impacts;

4 (G) test and operate models to support
5 land management decision-making, including
6 through—

7 (i) operating models to support man-
8 agement of wildland fire and vegetation;

9 (ii) the demonstration of integration
10 technologies to support management of
11 wildland fire in as near-real-time as pos-
12 sible; and

13 (iii) the incorporation of decision
14 science and social science that examines
15 the perception and adoption of information
16 related to wildland fire risk;

17 (H) develop a career pathway training pro-
18 gram with respect to carrying out wildland fire
19 research;

20 (I) develop data management protocols to
21 allow for full and open exchange of data pursu-
22 ant to the principles of findability, accessibility,
23 interoperability, and reusability (commonly re-
24 ferred to as the “FAIR principles”) and archive
25 and access that data;

1 (J) develop training programs for pre-
2 scribed fire implementation; and

3 (K) make its work and data fully and
4 openly available.

5 (c) NATIONAL CENTER COORDINATION BOARD.—

6 (1) ESTABLISHMENT.—There is established a
7 coordination board, to be known as the “National
8 Center Coordination Board”.

9 (2) COMPOSITION.—

10 (A) MEMBERS.—

11 (i) IN GENERAL.—The Board shall be
12 composed of one member representing each
13 regional center.

14 (ii) APPOINTMENT.—Each member
15 under clause (i) shall be selected by the
16 relevant regional center.

17 (B) CHAIR.—The Administrator and the
18 Chief shall serve as the Co-Chairs of the Board.

19 (3) DUTIES.—The Board shall—

20 (A) establish wildland fire science, data
21 management, and sharing protocols, and tech-
22 nological research priorities in cooperation with
23 each regional center and informed by the oper-
24 ational needs of wildland fire management
25 agencies;

1 (B) coordinate data collection efforts sup-
2 porting the efforts of each regional center, in-
3 cluding—

4 (i) building data layers across each re-
5 gion described in subsection (b)(2)(B); and

6 (ii) providing updates on the develop-
7 ment of wildland fire research models;

8 (C) ensure the coordination of, and avoid
9 unnecessary duplication of, the activities of the
10 regional centers and the activities of institutions
11 of higher education, land-grant colleges and
12 universities, Federal science agencies, and State
13 research organizations with respect to wildland
14 fire research, including—

15 (i) the National Oceanic and Atmos-
16 pheric Administration;

17 (ii) the National Laboratories;

18 (iii) the National Aeronautics and
19 Space Administration;

20 (iv) the Environmental Protection
21 Agency;

22 (v) the United States Fire Adminis-
23 tration;

24 (vi) the United States Geological Sur-
25 vey; and

1 (vii) any other relevant entity with
2 specialized expertise in wildland fire re-
3 search; and

4 (D) support end-to-end applications that
5 assist wildland fire management agencies in
6 adopting technologies and incorporating re-
7 search findings produced by the regional cen-
8 ters.

9 (4) MEETINGS.—

10 (A) BOARD MEETINGS.—The Board shall
11 meet quarterly.

12 (B) PUBLIC MEETINGS.—

13 (i) IN GENERAL.—The Board shall
14 hold public meetings with affected stake-
15 holders to solicit information from the gen-
16 eral public regarding the development and
17 implications of wildland fire research.

18 (ii) FREQUENCY.—Not less frequently
19 than annually, the Board shall hold at
20 least one public meeting in each State cov-
21 ered by a region described in subsection
22 (b)(2)(B).

23 (5) TERM.—A member of the Board shall be
24 appointed for a term of 4 years, except that of the

1 members first appointed, the Secretaries shall en-
2 sure that approximately—

3 (A) $\frac{1}{3}$ of members are appointed for a
4 term of 4 years;

5 (B) $\frac{1}{3}$ of members are appointed for a
6 term of 3 years; and

7 (C) $\frac{1}{3}$ of members are appointed for a
8 term of 2 years.

9 (6) VACANCIES.—

10 (A) IN GENERAL.—A vacancy on the
11 Board—

12 (i) shall not affect the powers of the
13 Board; and

14 (ii) shall be filled in the same manner
15 as the original appointment was made by
16 not later than 180 days after the date on
17 which the vacancy occurs.

18 (B) FILLING UNEXPIRED TERM.—An indi-
19 vidual chosen to fill a vacancy shall be ap-
20 pointed for the unexpired term of the member
21 replaced.

22 (7) RECOMMENDATIONS.—Not less frequently
23 than annually, the Board shall submit to the Secre-
24 taries recommendations to improve wildland fire re-

1 search to be included in the report described in sub-
2 section (e).

3 (d) ADVISORY BOARDS.—

4 (1) IN GENERAL.—In accordance with chapter
5 10 of title 5, United States Code (commonly referred
6 to as the “Federal Advisory Committee Act”), the
7 Secretaries shall establish at each regional center an
8 advisory board, to be known as the “Regional Advi-
9 sory Board”, to carry out the duties described in
10 paragraph (4).

11 (2) COMPOSITION.—

12 (A) IN GENERAL.—Each Regional Advi-
13 sory Board shall consist of members, who shall
14 be from, or have responsibility covering, the re-
15 gion covered by the relevant regional center, in-
16 cluding at minimum—

17 (i) 1 regional representative from each
18 wildland fire management agency, ap-
19 pointed by that agency;

20 (ii) 1 representative a State govern-
21 ment agency from each State located in
22 that region with expertise in forestry and
23 wildland fire mitigation and management,
24 appointed by the Governor of that State;

1 (iii) 1 representative from an Indian
2 Tribe or Tribal organization from that re-
3 gion with expertise in forestry and wildland
4 fire mitigation and management on Tribal
5 or Federal land, appointed by the Secre-
6 taries; and

7 (iv) additional representatives elected
8 under subparagraph (B)(ii).

9 (B) ELECTED MEMBERSHIP.—

10 (i) SUBCOMMITTEE.—Each Regional
11 Advisory Board shall solicit and approve,
12 on at least an annual basis, nominations
13 for individuals with operational expertise in
14 wildland fire mitigation and management
15 to serve as a representative on a sub-
16 committee to the Regional Advisory Board
17 for the purposes of clause (ii), composed of
18 not more than 15 individuals, including
19 representatives from, as applicable—

20 (I) institutions of higher edu-
21 cation or land-grant colleges and uni-
22 versities;

23 (II) nongovernmental organiza-
24 tions;

25 (III) private industry;

1 (IV) the wildland firefighter com-
2 munity, including organizations that
3 represent the interests of wildland
4 firefighters; and

5 (V) Southwest Ecological Res-
6 toration Institutes established under
7 section 5(a) of the Southwest Forest
8 Health and Wildfire Prevention Act of
9 2004 (16 U.S.C. 6704(a)).

10 (ii) ELECTION.—The subcommittee
11 described in clause (i) for a Regional Advi-
12 sory Board may elect a member or mem-
13 bers of the subcommittee to serve as a
14 member of the Regional Advisory Board
15 under subparagraph (A)(iv) for a 2-year
16 term.

17 (3) COMPENSATION.—Each member of a Re-
18 gional Advisory Board shall serve on a voluntary
19 basis without compensation.

20 (4) DUTIES.—Each Regional Advisory Board
21 shall—

22 (A) ensure and support the coordination of
23 wildland fire research between the relevant re-
24 gional center and Federal and State land man-
25 agement agencies in that region;

1 (B) communicate the operational needs of
2 Federal and State land management agencies
3 and wildland fire management agencies in that
4 region to the relevant regional center and to the
5 Board;

6 (C) advise, in coordination with the rel-
7 evant regional center, on research goals and ob-
8 jectives; and

9 (D) assist the relevant regional center with
10 the dissemination of research outputs and data
11 to Federal and State land management agencies
12 and wildland fire management agencies in that
13 region.

14 (5) MEETINGS.—Each Regional Advisory Board
15 shall meet quarterly.

16 (6) TERM.—Unless specified otherwise, a mem-
17 ber of a Regional Advisory Board shall serve for a
18 term of 4 years.

19 (7) VACANCIES.—

20 (A) IN GENERAL.—A vacancy on a Re-
21 gional Advisory Board—

22 (i) shall not affect the powers of the
23 Regional Advisory Board; and

24 (ii) shall be filled in the same manner
25 as the original appointment was made by

1 not later than 180 days after the date on
2 which the vacancy occurs.

3 (B) FILLING UNEXPIRED TERM.—An indi-
4 vidual chosen to fill a vacancy shall be ap-
5 pointed for the unexpired term of the member
6 replaced.

7 (e) REPORT ON WILDLAND FIRE RESEARCH.—Not
8 later than each of 2 years and 4 years after the date of
9 the enactment of this Act, the Secretaries, in consultation
10 with the Board, shall submit to the appropriate commit-
11 tees of Congress a report describing—

12 (1) the progress each regional center has made
13 in the development of wildland fire research; and

14 (2) recommendations to improve wildland fire
15 research.

16 (f) CONSULTATION.—In carrying out the require-
17 ments of this section, the Secretaries shall consult with—

18 (1) Federal science agencies; and

19 (2) the Office of Science and Technology Policy.

20 (g) AUTHORIZATION OF APPROPRIATIONS.—

21 (1) IN GENERAL.—

22 (A) REGIONAL CENTERS.—For estab-
23 lishing and administering the regional centers
24 established under subsection (a), there is au-
25 thorized to be appropriated—

- 1 (i) \$60,000,000 for fiscal year 2026;
2 (ii) \$61,000,000 for fiscal year 2027;
3 (iii) \$62,000,000 for fiscal year 2028;
4 (iv) \$63,000,000 for fiscal year 2029;
5 and
6 (v) \$64,000,000 for fiscal year 2030.

7 (B) BOARD.—For the Board established
8 under subsection (c), there is authorized to be
9 appropriated \$1,000,000 for each of fiscal years
10 2026 through 2030.

11 (2) ELIGIBLE USE OF FUNDS.—A regional cen-
12 ter may use amounts appropriated pursuant to an
13 authorization of appropriations under paragraph
14 (1)(A) for construction or the acquisition of equip-
15 ment necessary to carry out the requirements of this
16 Act.

17 (3) FLEXIBILITY.—

18 (A) IN GENERAL.—Subject to subpara-
19 graph (B), the Secretaries shall adjust appro-
20 priations under paragraph (1) between the re-
21 gional centers established under subsection (a)
22 as needed to account for differences in adminis-
23 trative costs and research challenges specific to
24 a particular region.

1 (B) NOTICE.—Before adjusting appropria-
2 tions under subparagraph (A) for a fiscal year,
3 the Administrator shall—

4 (i) include that adjustment in the
5 budget justification materials submitted by
6 the Administrator and the Chief in support
7 of the budget of the President (as sub-
8 mitted to Congress under section 1105 of
9 title 31, United States Code) for that fiscal
10 year; and

11 (ii) provide notice of that adjustment
12 to the appropriate committees of Congress.

13 (4) TRANSFER OF FUNDS.—A Federal science
14 agency may transfer, as necessary, additional appro-
15 priated amounts to a regional center for the purpose
16 of carrying out wildland fire research described in
17 subsection (b)(3)(B).