

## IAWF CLIMATE POSITION PAPER – SUMMARY

In May 2022, IAWF will host a conference on climate and wildfire in the United States and Australia. In anticipation of this important event, IAWF, under the leadership of past president Alen Slijepcevic, created a position paper on climate change.

Climate models predict drying and warming trends to continue in many parts of the world; this is likely to exacerbate wildfire risk, the likelihood of extreme fire seasons, and extreme fire consequences.



### CLIMATE, WEATHER AND FIRE

Fire seasons are longer, and fire weather is becoming more extreme. These trends are likely to continue with an increase in fire severity driven by hotter, drier conditions.

### ECOSYSTEM CHANGE AND FUELS MANAGEMENT

Fire is a natural and necessary component of ecosystem processes. Climate change is shifting fire regimes through its influence on weather, ignitions and fuels. Altered temperatures and rainfall patterns are changing the composition and distribution of vegetation, resulting in different fuel patterns and greater vulnerability of ecologically sensitive communities.

Vegetation management, including prescribed burning and the use of wildland fire to meet land-management objectives, can mitigate the risk of negative impacts to communities, economies, critical infrastructure, watersheds, and valuable natural and cultural resources. Prescribed burning and wildland fire used under prescriptive conditions can reduce future potentially harmful fire behavior, increase the potential success of containment efforts, and maintain and improve the health and resiliency of ecosystems.

**IAWF's Vision: To safely and effectively extinguish wildfires, when needed; use prescribed and wildland fire where possible to meet protection and land and resource management objectives; manage our natural resources through progressive fuel reduction to increase landscape resilience in the face of climate change; and educate and prepare our communities to accept our co-existence with smoke and wildland fire.**

### WILDFIRE MANAGEMENT

The conditions under which wildfire managers are expected to reduce risk to communities, protect assets and critical infrastructure are becoming more extreme. The complexity under which incident management teams operate is increasing and includes a more complex wildland urban interface, fire transmission in urban areas, increases in jurisdictions affected, higher costs, shrinking professional expertise, and greater public scrutiny. Wildland fire fighters face increased health and safety risks, including stress, fatigue and mental health strain due to extreme fires and less time for recovery between severe seasons.

### CALLS TO ACTION

- ✓ Identify ecosystems most at risk to large, high-severity wildfire
- ✓ Identify and enhance fire-adapted communities
- ✓ Foster safe and effective interagency wildfire response
- ✓ Increase prescribed burning
- ✓ Promote shared responsibility for safer community preparedness, response, and recovery
- ✓ Reimagine and invest in the wildland fire management workforce and systems
- ✓ Invest in and promote research, science, technology, and policy
- ✓ Create opportunities for continuous improvement and adaptive management.

### IAWF COMMITMENT

- Provide opportunities for research, knowledge and experience sharing.
- Take a position on contemporary wildland fire issues and advocate with national and international policy makers for improvements in wildland fire management policies in relation to climate change.
- Work with Indigenous Peoples to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and practices.
- Advocate for improved diversity in global fire management.