



## THE STEWARDSHIP PROJECT

 SUPPORTED BY THE  
CLIMATE & WILDFIRE INSTITUTE

The Stewardship Project is a collaboration of leading academics and tribal cultural practitioners supported by the Climate & Wildfire Institute. This new initiative is intended to promote greater use of active stewardship in the Western United States to address the wildfire crisis. It is critical to realign federal policies in a non-partisan way to prioritize scientifically sound restoration, including Traditional Indigenous Knowledge, and enable greater use of Indigenous practices. Below are our recommendations that address the Tribal right to steward, workforce and capacity development, regulatory realignment, and public management areas.

### Tribal Right to Steward

- 👤 Recognize a Tribal right to steward land as an unceded right. This should encompass the right to engage in cultural burning practices, which are distinct from prescribed fire and fuels management, and should be based on community recognition rather than membership in a federally recognized Tribe.
- 👤 Engage Indigenous leadership in agency decisionmaking and planning around stewardship activities, beyond typical consultation activities - which often burden Tribal governments through incremental project development and/or do not engage key knowledge keepers in the process.

### Workforce & Capacity Development

- 👤 Support the establishment of regional beneficial fire education and training centers in the western United States that are available to tribal, state, private, and federal fire managers. Centers should include a common core curriculum, regional specialization, and cultural frameworks where appropriate.
  - Create a curriculum that goes beyond fire suppression to the cultivation of skill and expertise in beneficial fire uses and evaluation, as has been done in the southeast United States.
  - Incorporate Indigenous knowledge and cultural burning practices into education and training, with curriculum development led by Indigenous fire practitioners and leaders.
  - Develop fire crews specifically trained for and focused on modifying burn effects on wildfires managed for resource benefit, and dedicate resources and equipment to support achieving ecological objectives.
  - Make training more accessible, including by using virtual learning platforms and offering tuition-free training, especially to non-federal and state practitioners.
- 👤 Empower tribal, state, and private sectors to collaborate on federal stewardship implementation. Create a more inclusive and streamlined system for any necessary contracting and/or regulatory requirements.



## Workforce & Capacity Development

- 👤 Authorize funding for regional beneficial fire training centers in the Western United States that are available to tribal, state, private, and federal fire managers, with both a common core curriculum, regional specialization, and cultural frameworks where appropriate. Centers should be run by a collaborative body, including members from Tribes and academia, versus a federal or state agency.
- 👤 Prioritize Forest Service crews to support stewardship activities, and ensure they are not deployed only for wildfire suppression. Encourage the agency shift to permanent, year-round stewardship positions, retaining recent salary increases.
- 👤 Authorize the Forest Service to create Stewardship Incident Command Teams (SICTs) with specific responsibility and focus on complex prescribed fires and wildfires managed for resource benefit. Organize SICTs to provide key roles for Tribal and local partners to prioritize Indigenous and local knowledge into proactive stewardship planning and implementation.

## Public Land Management Areas

- 👤 Develop Strategic Fire Zones. Require Forest Service land management districts or field offices to evaluate areas for potential designation as a “Strategic Fire Zone,” in consultation with local tribal entities and communities, where ignitions can be managed for forest resilience.