



May 21, 2025

Dear DNRC Fire Managers and Line Officers,

Wildfires continue to grow in complexity and impact communities across the western states at an unprecedented rate. Montana is no exception. Each year, Montanans experience the effects of wildfire, reinforcing the critical role of Montana DNRC's fire protection program in protecting lives, property, and natural resources across 60 million acres.

Over the past year, Montanans have made their expectations of effective fire management clear and DNRC is responding with additional resources and preparation for the upcoming season. To meet these expectations, we must:

- Continue to ensure we are prioritizing the safety of our workforce in an ever-increasingly complex and dangerous work environment.
- Strengthen our fire program leadership's understanding of roles, responsibilities, and operational framework, while promoting a unified DNRC presence through professional conduct and appearance.
- Reposition ourselves in the wildfire protection landscape by being proactive, knowledgeable, and professional leaders.
- Strategically allocate and effectively use our preparedness resources.
- Take care of our needs at home while also providing support to the national interagency fire response system when resources are in high demand or unavailable.
- Continue to plan, communicate, and coordinate with counties, local government and federal partners to be able to respond quickly and effectively.
- Engage early and often with federal agency counterparts when federal fires have the potential to impact DNRC or county protection areas.
- Ensure DNRC expertise and resources are being fully represented and utilized.
- Stay actively engaged as we navigate the changes in our fire program and the changing wildland fire landscape of Montana.

The wildland fire management landscape is changing, and DNRC must adapt and evolve to ensure continued success. As demands on our agency grow, we must take a more active



leadership role in Montana's wildfire protection and response. DNRC is uniquely positioned to bring knowledge, experience, and resources to the table, and we must directly participate in shaping fire management strategies at both the state and federal levels. The challenges ahead require a proactive, engaged, and well-prepared leadership team, and it is imperative that we step forward to meet these expectations.

Our mission remains clear: protecting Montana's communities and natural resources through effective fire leadership, preparedness, and consistent engagement. I ask each of you to take ownership of these expectations, lead with confidence, prioritize the safety of our employees, and ensure DNRC remains at the forefront of Montana's wildfire protection and response. Your leadership and dedication are the foundation of our success, and I thank you for your commitment to our mission.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shawn Thomas". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Shawn Thomas
Division Administrator, Forestry and Trust Lands

