

We have a lot of content to get through and, just excited to to go over that. And thank you, Chris, for kicking this off. Just a couple quick reminders. Be sure to meet yourself as you come in since we have so many, attendees. Just to make it easier, we're gonna hold questions until the end. So at the end, if you just wanna raise your hands or pop those questions in the chat, that'll be fantastic.

And, with that, I'm just gonna go ahead and turn it over to Chris to get us started with Leader's intent and set the vision. Thank you, everyone.

Thank you, Amanda. And and good, good morning and good afternoons, everyone, for joining us. For those of you that don't know me, my name's Sprint, and I am the Deputy chief for the National Forest System, in wash in Washington DC, but today I'm Mount Missoul at the technology and development center. And I, really appreciate everybody jumping on today.

So it's a it's an important moment for the agency right now. And what we're gonna talk about today is a decision that was made, with by the secretary of Dilsack, the Secretary of Agriculture, and the leadership of the of USDA and of the forest service.

To approach the work that we're doing to help us deliver on our broad scale ten year wildland fire strategy differently than we've done in the past.

We we are in a space right now as an agency where both the effects of fire on communities, on delivery of water, and to the very integrity of the the forest that we're asked to conserve right now. Are at a critical juncture.

We have been saying for decades that what we're seeing change over time here is accelerating and that we need to take action now.

And for the first time, Congress has been funding us to do that. And we are trying to work on all the processes and the approaches that we're taking the agency to actually address this at the scales that we need. Chief Moore said, this is our highest priority. This is the focus that we need to be in. Whether you're in a priority landscape or whether you're in a high risk area that you've got community defense issues or high risk fire sheds we need to be working differently. We need to be operating differently.

I recognize that for most of the forest out there and most regions that are grappling with this, you're at a pretty complex situation right now. You're being asked to do a lot of things. We still haven't grown our staffs or capacity in ways that are really what's needed to deliver on and we're working diligently on that. Whether that's from a from a district level all the way up through the Washington office.

Another part of this is making sure that the approaches that we're taking to do this work are as effective and as efficient as they can be.

And and that kid lay at multiple places within the agency.

Under the bipartisan infrastructure law, that brought lots of funding to the agency. It also brought, it also brought some authorities to the agency that we have not exercised yet, but we are exercising now.

So, there was one part of of the bipartisan infrastructure law. It's at section four zero eight zero seven for any of you that have read it. That essentially is called emergency actions.

And it allows the secretary, of agriculture to designate areas where where he sees or the secretary sees that an emergency situation is present and that we need to do things differently in order to address what's going on in those areas differently.

Bypass and infrastructure law brought two authorities that went along with this One of them is a category exclusion underneath that helps us do linear fuel breaks. We've been implementing that for the past year. But there was another authority that was part of this situation determination that essentially says, said you can define these areas where there's an emergency.

And then in these areas, there are certain actions that if you're going to do that, then you can actually comply with a national environmental policy act differently.

And and in this case, it's an authority that allows us to look at only two alternatives, action and no action and that there's not you you can exercise not having an objection period, and there's covered actions that go along with that.

The secretary has made a determination in these areas that an emergency situation is occurring on national forest system lands. Both on the front side of what we're seeing on Western fires and has designated all high risk fire sheds, two hundred and fifty or so of them.

As as having an emergency situation present. It's nearly twenty seven million acres. Where you can use these authorities upon approval from the Washington office.

In addition to that, he's also started initially at looking at those areas that have been impacted by fire and saying the same sort of situation occurs there. Such as the areas in Northern New Mexico that were affected by fire last year and in California.

His determination has created the use of these authorities in those places as well. And as the two thousand twenty three fire season or other disasters start to occur.

We are going to, look at using these authorities and creating creating the same sort of space as the as those occur.

Now for chief Moore, for the leadership team of the agency and of the secretary, When we when we're making something like this, this emergency determination, we also thought it was important, as the chief said, is if there's an emergency, we need to show up as there actually is an emergency. And so going beyond the NIPA authorities, what he challenged our national leadership to do is to to create a space for you where you can request other accelerated more efficient approaches to do your work like we would if there was an ongoing wildfire.

And so as part of this decision by the secretary, and by the the subsequent decisions by the chief. And what you're gonna be presented here today is that we're going to we are establishing a process right now. Where you can request the use of the NIPA authorities that I just talked about. You could use other authorities, but also you can make requests to us of, some efficiencies and authorities for consultation for, TOD species.

You can create you can ask for efficiencies in how, and using authorities and how we're approaching contracting.

You can ask for, efficiencies and how we're approaching our grants and agreements processes or hiring processes.

You could ask for efficiencies and authorities for other policy based pieces of what we're doing. That you think that you need some sort of temporary exception for. And so I wanna be really clear on that one. So we're giving you the space. If you're in one of these areas that we determined as having an emergency situation present. If there is a part of our handbook and manuals, of policy that is creating, an area of, is really delaying the work that you're doing and you're looking for us to create some sort of specific temporary exception to that policy. As long as it doesn't bother, violate a statute or regulation.

We're gonna consider those sorts of requests and make those sort of terminations. As an example, we've had already some requests, looking at the disposal a biomass and wood coming off of some of our large scale restoration, resiliency and fuels reduction projects asking for some exceptions to their approach of how we categorize wood in terms of appraisals.

And we are working through on granting that. And so over the course of today's webinar, we're going to give you an overview of the authorities that we got through the bipartisan infrastructure law. What areas, have been made by this determination

by the secretary that are available for that. We're also gonna talk through the process of how, you can request to be, given essentially the authority to use these authorities.

We're gonna talk through how you can request for policy exceptions or other emergency approaches, whether it was consultation or through contracting that we're gonna work through to help deliver that for you. The entire idea from us as the leadership of the agency and from chief Moore is to empower you to work differently, to think differently on delivering your work.

We're gonna empower the regions and the and all the washing office to think differently from where we've been to help accelerate your work.

And this applies whether you're in a priority landscape, or if you have a high risk fire shed outside of one of those. There's some core values here that are really important to us. So the first one is that we have to do this in a transparent way in an inclusive way that involves our communities that we're being, collaborative as as as we're working through these projects.

We need to be really conscientious about the how we're doing the work and making sure that we're engaging with tribes and that we're we're working with them through consultation processes as we're doing this to make sure that We're incorporating, what they're asking us and feedback to us as we're going forward.

We're gonna be really strategic.

There are authorities that we've had used in the past that don't come from the bipartisan infrastructure law, but are within our own people authorities.

That allow us actually to start to implement some work before we've even completed compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act.

We've used those recently in a couple places. They're gonna be used strategically going forward. Upon request, but will have a much higher threshold for approval than, let's say, the authority we talked about from the bipartisan infrastructure law. We're gonna go into some detail about that.

The the next thing I wanna just kinda lay out there is that, as we go through this webinar today, ask questions, when we get there, we're gonna we're gonna answer all those. We'll put together additional sessions as we go forward.

A little bit about just overview top process.

Any of these authorities that you are requesting and asking for us to make exceptions to or used have to be approved by the chief. And so there is going to be a

case by case request.

Our challenge is to make that as efficient as possible for you.

Our goal is that when we get a request in, that we are gonna turn around a response of either needing some more information or a preliminary focus within a week. Now having said that, we also have to do a national consultation.

It's really important for us to sit down and and talk with tribes right now about how we're rolling out this program and how we're implementing it. That means there's about sixty days that we're gonna go through through that consultation right now. And so we we are willing we we will get a requests that will come in during that time that we'll review. We may ask you for more information, but we're not going to approve anything And so we've been through that consultation and reverence in respect to our government to government relations that we have at a national scale.

So I'm gonna turn this over to our staff here, to go through the details with you.

But it's an exciting time. It's an important time And, I'm really looking forward to, what's the, what, what questions you have and how we can implement this successfully.

So thank you for joining us today, and I am going to turn it over.

I think Amanda, I'm turning it over to Jacqueline next or Linda? Jacqueline.

Amanda. Amanda.

Amanda. Alright. Thank you, Amanda.

Thank you for that overview, Chris. And I'm now going to pass it on to Linda Walker and Steve Stottleman to go over the Nipa Emergency Action portal.

Alright. Well, good morning everyone except for the few of us that might be sitting on the East Coast. I hope you can hear me. My name is Linda Walker. I am the incoming director of ecosystem management coordination here in the Washington office.

And I am new to the forest service. Very excited to be here, coming here from the US fish and wildlife service, having a long career and ecosystem restoration and environmental analysis. So very happy to join at this really exciting time where we are moving forward with with intention. And as the secretary has declared, we are in an emergency situation and we need to act as such.

So Steve Stadelman and I are gonna speak about the NIPA portion of the authorized emergency actions that Chris talked about. And I'm also gonna talk a little bit about a

portal that is being created to help expedite review and improve approval of actions from multiple program areas collectively.

We're trying to make this easier for all of you in the field. The speakers that follow us will cover other areas where efficiencies might be available for forest to implement emergency actions.

As Chris said, there's a strong expectation that the forest service will use these and all other available emergency authorities to expedite projects in these critical fire sheds.

We need to think differently and we need to take a different approach.

Chris mentioned section four zero eight zero seven of the bipartisan infrastructure legislation Act. And that section of the Act allows the secretary to make a determination that the forest service may carry out authorized emergency on national forest system lands by declaring that an emergency situation exists.

And he has done such that by declaring that the two hundred and fifty high risk fire sheds as well as post fire recovery areas are in an emergency and we may move forward with emergency actions.

This provision in bill is really helpful because it streamlines the process, as Chris mentioned, for new evaluations, and it may even help streamline the NIPA process for some ongoing reviews.

But I do wanna emphasize it doesn't eliminate NIPA, and we will continue to satisfy all public scoping and consultation requirements. And Steve's going to go into more detail on that and other authorities very shortly.

In addition to the new authority in Bill, the service also has other existing emergency authorities that may be used to accelerate project implementation.

Certainly, we have several authorities through NIPA that Steve's gonna talk about. But we also have other authorities through endangered Species Act, the the National Historic Presentation Act, other HR authorities and contracting authorities. All of these we're going to talk about today and we're gonna create a place and a portal for you to input your requests.

All the conversations that we're having today and the efforts that we're standing up today are related to the emergency that the secretary has declared in the Western fireshed and post fire recovery areas.

We may, in the future, declare other areas as emergencies as conditions exist or arise on the landscape. So I wanna be really clear that the work that we're doing today to stand up the efforts for emergency actions are not a one and done. And that it is possible that we may be able to take advantage of the efficiencies that we are creating now to address other emergencies in the future.

The EMC ecosystem management coordination staff area was charged with developing the process for review, approval, and notification that Chris talked about for projects that want to use the new NIPA authorities, as well as the review of other authorities for NIPA. And we recognize that there's many other authorities that the forest service can use, and each of those authorities has different criteria, different approval requirements and different notification requirements. And the field as a result may need some guidance on the best approach to maximize your outcomes.

Our end goal here is to make it easier for the field to implement these actions to address the wildfire crisis strategy and to ensure that we provide you a place as Chris mentioned to request exceptions or highlight challenges that you may be having to addressing this emergency situation.

You in the field are in the best position to be able to tell us what's what is limiting you from being successful.

And this is your place for you to let us know that. And as Chris mentioned, we are all addressing this as an emergency, and it is an all hands on deck from our perspective here in the Washington office.

To that end, we've worked very closely with the enterprise team, and we've created a portal on SharePoint for the field to use to submit these approval requests to ask these questions and to identify areas where they need help. The portal's gonna serve multiple purposes It'll be a place for the forests to input requests for the use of NIPA authorities, including the new bill provision, Those requests will be routed to the regions for review and concurrence and onto the Washington office for processing. And as Chris said, these will take top priority. Any requests that are placed into this portal will receive priority review and we will have dedicated staff ensuring that they move in a timely manner.

And also as Chris mentioned, the portal will be a place for the field to ask questions and input requests and other needs to accelerate actions that need to take place on the landscape. And as I mentioned, some examples of those are HR help contracting assistance, And so on that we will go into more detail, in our next series of presentations.

Some portals some portions of the portal are still under development. But we are hopeful that we can at least launch the NIPA approval portion in the next two weeks. And I want to extend a huge thanks to Bob Dezel and my Constanza of the enterprise team that have stepped up to create this site in absolutely record time.

So now I'm gonna turn it over. I'll turn the mic over to Steve Statleman, our NIPA specialist on our team, who's gonna briefly explain the differences in the NIPA authorities.

Steve?

Thank you, Linda.

There are several authorities available that may be used to expedite environmental compliance with the National Environmental Policy Act, leading to earlier implementation when an emergency exists.

Each authority uses different criteria and has different notification requirements, but all four have to be reviewed by the chief prior to use.

EMC, ecosystem management coordination, is your point of contact for questions and interpretation of these authorities.

I'll briefly touch on each tool beginning with the one that's probably most familiar, and that's our emergency situation determination or ESD.

This tool comes from our own regulation to eighteen point two one and has been in place for several decades.

This permits a unit to waive the objection review process.

So it's only for environmental assessments and environmental impact statements.

It's often used for timber salvage operations following a wildfire, but there are many other uses for it.

A second tool is called emergency response.

This tool comes from our own NIPA regulation to to twenty point four.

So using this authority, a unit can propose alternative arrangements to NIPA compliance for a categorical exclusion or an environmental assessment.

So this was used recently in region five where an emergency existed, and that emergency required partial implementation prior to signing the NIPA decision

document.

The third tool is very similar. It's called alternative arrangements.

And this tool also comes from our knee our own niepa regulation.

And it allows a unit to propose alternative arrangements to Niepa compliance for an environmental impact statement. That's where the difference is. And this actually requires consultation with the council on environmental quality. CEQ.

Traditionally, this tool is used more for major disasters when partial implementation is required before the rod is signed.

Implementing part of a proposed action prior to a decision is a typical example of what the alternative arrangements are to NIPA within the alternative arrangements tool and the emergency response tool.

So the last tool is the newest tool, the Western Fire shed Emergency Action.

This tool was set in place by the secretary and establishes two hundred and fifty high risk fire sheds as eligible for expedited NEPA compliance under the BIL section four zero eight zero seven. It also includes some post fire recovery areas in California, New Mexico, and Arizona.

As Chris said, it's a lot of land. Twenty seven point seven million acres.

So this tool can be used to prepare for a potential natural natural disaster.

Or conditions threatening communities in natural resources, as well as actions following an unforeseen disaster.

So it can be used pre event or post event.

Under this authority, within the designated areas, a unit can waive the administrative review process, limit alternatives in the NIPA analysis, and is provided special injunctive relief standards if the project is challenged in court?

So it's only for EAs and EISs, and it can be used for new or ongoing projects.

So each of these tools has a slightly different approach to expediting environmental compliance in response to emergencies. So each one should be examined carefully before use.

The intent is to use these as authorities strategically and thoughtfully in places with tribal, community, and partner support, the plan and implement treatments around

communities and critical infrastructure.

So as was alluded to earlier, we're standing up a portal. So requests for these authorities must come to the chief through the emergency action portal.

The portal has initial screening questions, and then directs the user to enter project information specific to the authority requested.

General project information, such as proposed action, location, size is needed, as well as information around why the request authority is needed over the standard compliance process.

And in the future, the portal will be expanded to include other emergency actions.

So EMC is hosting a webinar on February six teent, where we will examine these four authorities in greater detail as well as the emergency action pro portal. And we'll be sending that invite out later this week.

So thank you. I'll turn it back to you, Linda.

Thanks, Steve. I appreciate that very much. And as you can tell, each of these authorities is quite nuanced and, and should be considered thoughtfully and evaluated to determine what the best course of action is that will allow you to move forward with your projects. As I also mentioned, there there is a lot of variability between program areas in terms of what authorities are available for you to use the level of approval and the level of information that's needed. That is one of the reasons why we are developing this portal that will allow you to reach out to each of the different program areas to obtain the guidance and the processes and procedures that you need to take in order to take advantage. And again, as I mentioned, there'll also be a place for you to identify those areas where you're having challenges or would like to request exceptions, or accelerated actions.

So now I'm gonna turn the mic over to Sarah Soyer in biological and physical resources who's gonna talk about Our efforts to prioritize endangered species act consultations in these areas. Sarah?

Awesome. Thanks Linda.

Hi, everyone. I'm Sarah Soyer. I'm an acting assistant director in biological and physical resources in the WO here on behalf of Rob Harper, our director who couldn't be with us today. So I'm just gonna talk a little bit about the endangered species act consultation process.

And I'll just start out by saying, you know, echoing what Chris said and Linda said, we're here in a this is not business as usual situation, and we recognize that fact, and so we've been working really closely with our fish and wildlife service headquarters office and our National Marine fishery services West Coast Regional Office.

To really come together with the intent of making ESA consultation procedures more efficient, especially in light of the secretary's determination.

So I'll just update you on where we are, what we think the keys to success are, and then what, you can do what we can help you with moving forward as needed. So, in addition to these authorities, that we received through the bill, we also were authorized to transfer for funding directly to the services to help with our section seven endangered species act consultation needs. So we've been working with the services over the last year to, work through a process of transferring those funds. We'll first identifying capacity needs and transferring funds so that they could hire on additional or calling consultation assets to meet our needs.

So we identified approximately fifty positions in the two services across the West, and they've been able to fill about three quarters of those so far.

And then we're gonna continue working with them on working across the regions to continue to identify additional capacity needs within the services to be able to meet our needs for consultation in a timely fashion. So we're working already on additional positions. They may need to fill an FY twenty three and beyond. And then we're also working with them to, form an interagency team to make recommendations about processes and ways to move forward efficiently together.

So to make use of that new capacity that's coming on board with our service partners, I just wanna reiterate what we think the key successes are to make use of capacity. I don't think these will be surprises to anyone, but these are just kind of the key foundations of moving out on this efficiently. And those are prioritization, communication, and may use of existing streamlining tools. So first, really clear prioritization in light of the, emergency determination the wildfire crisis strategy, really being clear about, what our prioritizations are at the field office and regional levels with our partners in fish and wildlife service and nymphs, and communicating clearly and early what those priority orders are.

The second is really clear in early communication and sufficient and clear information exchange on those priority efforts so that they can move out efficiently on consultation, as soon as we are ready to move out with providing them the information. So clear early repeated communication and sufficient information for them.

Third is making use of our existing streamlining processes as much as possible, which I know many regions are already doing. So that includes things like programmatic consultation where, you know, we are developing design criteria and standards upfront and we're doing analyses of once in advance of, projects instead of on a project by project basis. Given that to address this emergency situation, we're gonna be doing a lot similar actions across our high risk fire sheds. So really making use of doing those, analyses once in advance.

So then the key thing, the key message I wanna give you all today is this this increased capacity, in the services and this kinda prioritization communication streamlining is not meeting the need to move out on the actions that are necessary to address these emergency situations on the timelines and the scale that is necessary, then we want you to come to us as soon as you are getting these red flags and early indicators these might not be enough. And then we can help assist you with potentially two opportunities or options.

One would be exploring with the services the potential to reprioritize some of their existing consultation assets and capacity.

So if we have capacity in one place, and we have a need and another, then we can help work with you and the services and try to reprioritize those efforts. To meet those timelines and scales of action that we need. The other potential option for us to explore is helping to facilitate requests where needed and where appropriate to the services for ESA Emergency consultation procedure.

And so that would be something to come up through, our office and to try to work with you to see ensure that we've explore all of the other potential opportunities, and this is the the correct way forward, and then we can help you work with the services to try to request that.

That possibility for emergency consultation.

So that's where we are with the ESA. That's all I have to share for now. So I will turn it back over to you Linda or am I trying to get over to the next person?

I think Amanda's gonna navigate.

I can pass it along for you. Thank you, Sarah. So much. Next up is gonna be NH PA with Doug Stevens and John Crockett, so if you guys wanna pop on. Alright. Thank you.

Hi, everybody. I'm I'm Doug Stevens. I'm the national program manager for the the, heritage program in Washington, DC.

And, And I want yeah. And I want to talk to you about, how the compliance with the National Store preservation Act, fits into these emergency, declarations procedures.

So as many of you probably already know, all federal agencies under the National Store preservation app have to consider the impacts of their actions on historic properties, on cultural sites, sites that are important to consulting parties, such as tribes, prior to undertaking those activities on the ground.

The emergency situations do not change that requirement. We we still, need to consider as a federal agency our impacts on historic properties.

But fortunately, the regulations that guide federal agencies, to to comply with the the requirements for the National Store Present Act, allow for other other processes and ways of streamlining this, the sexual as many of you already know it as the section one zero six consultation process. It's a and One of one part of the of the regulations allows for emergency determinations. It allows for, you know, the consideration of when a true emergency is happening, and there's there's a considerations to for concerns for life and property a federal agency may use the with consultation with the advisory council on the store preservation.

May use eight hundred point twelve. That's a part of the of the regulations that guide federal agencies in the compliance process.

To to, shorten the consultation process considerably.

But the the emergency needs to be one that is considered in the regulations to qualify as as a true emergency.

So we are, is so we're we we're coming out with guidance. We're almost done with it to go out to the field on what on on how to consider true emergencies under eight hundred point twelve.

Many of these emergencies that, that will be that are declared here don't qualify may not qualify under eight hundred point twelve. Fortunately, there is also another way for federal agencies consider their effects on their their action of their actions on historic properties, after the the the planning decision has been made after the NIPA has been completed.

But federal agencies must first, consult with with with consulting parties with tribes and state historic preservation offices, Chipos, on how they're going to to comply with the National Store Association Act.

After the NEPA decision has been made. And that's put into some form some type of document. Usually, it's a project specific programmatic agreement.

And that and in that way, so when the forest service under undertakes these projects that, we can't consider we, you know, we don't fully know what's what the effects are prior to the project, to the, the the decision being made. We put them in a project specific programmatic agreement.

We also but fortunately, we also have a national we call it the national phasing PA. This is called phasing in the regulations.

That was executed a year ago. And that provides some standardization in this consultation process and and streamlines coming to that final document, so we call it a heritage implementation plan in the National Basing PA.

That that obligates the forest service to to to actions that it will take prior to on the ground activities happening in in the project area. So, that's been, that's being used in in situations that are similar to the emergencies that we're talking about on this call today. And, and and that's that's a that's one of the tools that available for, for line officers to choose in the compliance process. And, So the the national phasing PA project specific programmatic agreements and another tool that may be available to you is is a statewide PAs that we've negotiated already with, state historic preservation offices.

That allow for that may allow for phasing, that may allow for other procedures that allow us to get to to fulfill our obligation on any PA in a more efficient manner. Those may be available, and they may not be available. It depends on on the forest and the state.

And, So the, so the, you know, so the main point here is we still have obligations.

Even in even in emergencies, to, consider the effects of our actions on historic properties.

And and to consider the the, and to include con voices in in the in the process of considering those facts. So, but there are tools available to us to streamline this process, and and to and to complete and to complete our obligations in a more efficient way. And, the and and like I said, where we have we have guidance coming out, on for for the field, for the archaeologists that are on forests and, to to, better understand this consideration. These this process in emergencies.

And, also, the regional heritage program managers are very much dialed in to these, the what we're talking about today. And, definitely, you know, go go and talk to them and consult with them in these situations.

And, and any any and definitely the local archaeologists. So, that's I think that's all That's basically kind of the summary and look forward to any questions that you have.

Thanks so much, Doug. Just wanted to make sure that, John wasn't planning on popping on to add anything before we move along.

Okay. Well, with that, we're gonna turn it over to, the tribal consultation presentation.

And that will be with Richard Adkins.

And Richard, I believe you're on mute.

Of course. I am. Thank you so much. Anyway, my name is doctor Richard Atkins. I'm the acting deputy director for the Office of Tribal Relations that I'm standing in for Reed Robinson today who was unable to attend. Thank you all for being here.

I won't burden you with too much of this stuff. I'd just like to let you know that even though we have this emergency declaration and that OTR has been involved with Chris on this on this declaration.

We still have to, have our all authorities considered when we when we implement these projects. So first off, let me back up and say, g to g g to g will still be required on the emergency fireshifts and we will work with you on on how that can happen. But, I just want to also let you know that there is national facilitation. It was implemented as soon as this announcement came out. We have two meetings that are going to take place nationally with tribes at the end of this month in the beginning of March.

I'd also like to say that, when we were implementing these these fire sheds that we have to implement them with, or implement our programs with existing authorities.

And within those authorized, authorities, you can still explore emergency stipulations. So what I mean by that is if you go back and look at the the memo that was signed by chief Moore it does say that, we are going to have to adhere to all existing authorities at the regional and unit level when we're implementing these, policies.

That said, I would like to encourage you all to look at, for service manual fifteen hundred chapter fifteen sixty. That's our force service manual for tribal relations because on page fifty four to fifty seven, you'll note a couple of pages of authorities and the time frames with within which we have to consult with tribal communities under which authority we're acting on. Most of those, time frames say general.

They're not that helpful. There are specifics for NIPA and NHPA and ESA.

However, with the emergency authorities, as Doug mentioned in others that these can be truncated depending on the authority themselves, but I just want to note that it's going to be very important to remember that while we have all these authorities that exist and that we operate under and that compell us to communicate with tribes either at under NIPA or ESA or n a NHPA, we still have a larger authority that even if we we're somehow magically able to declare this complete emergency and we just could move forward. We still have our trust and fiduciary responsibility.

And that's what I want to encourage you to to remember that we need to work with tribes hand in hand to get relationship going to understand where they may have resources of concerns that are on tribal lands that may be affected by our our authorities or on, of course, forest lands. There are treaties, reserved rights and other things that may be in effect. So this is gonna be a an interesting endeavor, but I just wanna let you know that that, OTR is going to be here to help with that and that the fiduciary responsibilities Some some of you have, questions about that. We're gonna be here to help you with that.

And I'd also like to, say just one note. And I know I'm moving kind of quickly here because I'm gonna turn this over to another AD, but the national phasing PA that Doug mentioned to you is not adhered to by all the regions. So that's an authority that you might want to explore if you're not adhering to that national PA or national phasing PA, but also There are state PAAs that we're under in the region where I'm at and there are some other, programmatic agreements.

Nevertheless, we still have to consult with tribes on these issues. And finally, we've heard the use of CEs of this being very important. But remember, a categorical exclusion is still a decision and it still requires tribal consultation.

So how are we going to help you go about that when we have so many relationships that we need to to build? And we're gonna do that with assisting you in any way we can, but I wanna turn this over now to Jennifer Croft who will help just briefly explain some of these, efforts we're gonna make. Jen?

Yep. Thank you, Richard. Good morning and afternoon to those of you. I'm Jen Croft. I'm the acting assistant director for Office of Travel Relations, Travel Engagements Group.

So we're looking at the way forward. So how can we better assist and improve the field's needs to accelerate pace and scale? In relationship to the two hundred and fifty wildfire crisis strategy fire sheds that have been identified.

What we would like to encourage all of you irregardless if you're in that group of twenty one right now, or you're along the lines of the two fifty or even outside the

scope of that group. Consider the reality that this is an emergency authority that is enacted to some extent, but it is not the only tool in the toolbox, and we would encourage all of you to initiate consult consultation on all two hundred and fifty wildfire crisis strategy fire sheds at this time, to make sure that you're including and identifying those tribal interests that are within those landscapes.

For those of you who are pursuing outside, the same process is is, is gonna need to occur in order to help accelerate and or prevent the perception that we're circumventing of truncating beyond the means of existing rules and regulations.

This will also give you an opportunity to incorporate that indigenous knowledge that part of a lot of the joint secretarial orders and the Justice Justice forty, identifying priorities, bringing in tribal priorities along, with their concerns, and looking for, impacts to tribal lands, and we wanna make sure that we're not impacting them in a significant manner.

The opportunity to use tribal crews in workforce has now emerged even stronger than before. We have a lot of tools available for that, including funding for tribal force protection act pursuant and the use of tribal force net six thirty eight authorities along with good neighbor and shared stewardship.

So consider these options and, and consider their utilization of that work force. I know that's a a continuing issue for most locations is workforce capacity. This is a great opportunity to integrate and be inclusive of your tribal nations.

Also, in an effort to help the national consultation process that has already begun, I would encourage you to start that process in an effort to help that and inform that national leadership of potential issues, problems, and the local problems or protocols that we need to have there.

As a group, you can establish the protocols and consultations for planning implementation.

And I would highly encourage that quarterly tribal consultation approach to coordinate and stay in the loop with each other because at the end of the day, President Biden, secretary Vilsack, and chief Moore, fairly distinct in their expectations that the inclusion of tribal nations in our land management planning, project development, and, and response to post fire is needs to be an institutional norm. And so as we head into this direction, if you have questions, we are in the process of formulating a tribal action plan to assist in some of this discussion. We have a lot of policy, folks, and lots of project information with your regional tribal relations, program managers that we can assist with this process So if you have questions or concerns, we can

certainly clarify them to help make use of this authority and all the others that we have in our toolbox at this time. Mac, do you Amanda?

Thank you both so much for that and that good reminder as well. Next, we're gonna turn it over to Tenille Boostom for the business operation side of things.

Thank you.

Thanks, Amanda. You have Tenille bustam here, and I am the acting associate deputy chief for business operations. And a big thank you to NFS for the invitation of collaboration on all these collective efforts. It means so much. And to all of our colleagues on this call, why don't you all to know that we in business operations are working in complement with NFS.

We now have greater authorizing environment to operate in, and that allows us to use our existing and new tools more effectively.

We're using all of these to get to yes quicker. That's the goal. So things like the Keystone agreements, the acquisition strategy, We've hired more people in HRM, PPS, Office of grants and agreements in CIO.

We've established the equivalent of strike teams to help carry out our work or developing agreements and contracts that take advantage of all of our authorities to the maximum extent possible.

So that's what I wanted to speak about a little bit is some of those authorities, which you saw in the reference list, and I wanna provide some synopsis of those. So that for the procurement and property services, you'll saw you probably saw the list of the federal acquisition regulations And in the FAR, it already identifies and allow allows for the use of special authorities under certain circumstances such as areas already under presidential disaster declaration.

And in addition, there are special targeted contracting authorities that already exist that are aimed at supporting underserved communities and entities to streamline the contracting processes yielding quicker contract awards. And in some cases, we can award on a sole source basis. To qualified contractors.

And so contracts can be awarded to small business administration, socially, and economically disadvantaged entrepreneurs, historically underutilized business owned small businesses, service disabled veteran owned small business, economically disadvantaged women owned small business and women owned small business. And this can be awarded as a competitive or on a sole source basis.

In addition, with USDA approval, we have the authority for micro purchase threshold and the simplified acquisition threshold thresholds to increase to twenty thousand and eight hundred thousand dollars respectively to support contingency operations.

And we also have access to IPO and the whole incident procurement operations, including Viper, IVPA's, IDIQ's, and sole sourcing. Like I said earlier, And so this includes access to things like type two crews, the viper equipment caterers, all are available to support this work via existing contracts.

And when it comes to our office of grants and agreements, we have the reciprocal fire protection act, and that essentially states that if there's no agreement for a fire suppression in place that our agency is authorized to render emergency assistance in extinguishing the fire to preserve life and property. There are also a whole host of other authorities that grants and agreements is using to advance this work and support the the efforts that you all are moving forward with. And that's the cooperative funds and deposits act. The interior and regulated agencies appropriation act and the stewardship Authority, as well as good neighbor authority, which you are all familiar with.

And then from human resources management, we also have existing authorities that we've been using and one that we'll be digging into. The two that we've already been using, you are familiar with, one came from Bill. It's on that list, and that is the authority to hire without competition into an NTE one year but it can't extend beyond two years.

And the other authority that already exists is the five CFR thirty day critical need appointment. And that's to immediately appoint individuals for thirty days into critical positions. And they those can be extended for an additional thirty days. So both those have already existed. The one that we're digging into a little bit more is the five CFR emergency direct hire authority for critical positions.

In response to emergencies. That's the one that requires OPM approval.

And our HRM is per paired to facilitate a request to OPM for a direct hire authority specific to the needs to address the emergency declaration.

However, I need to share that this cannot be done until all of the units that are impacted in this emergency declaration identify their holistic needs for hiring. So when those needs are identified, then, and they must be clearly identified the positions that support the pieces of delivery around the emergency response. Once that happens, then we can activate with moving forward to think through the process for, acquiring OPM approval.

The other thing I wanna share is, so those are the authorities that we have and now how to use them. Well, that's going to come through educational opportunities.

And so for PPS, PPS plans to use a range of forms that will target primarily contracting officers for awareness and education on how to use the FAR and the specific authorities related to these emergency determinations.

And so those forms will include a monthly PPS leaders training calls, and that's for leaders down to the zone branch chief level.

The acquisition program support officers will provide guidance during the acquisition planning process with mission partners advising them on the appropriate use of the emergency authorities as part of the regular customer engagements, and the compliance and oversight branch will develop any necessary guidance on use of authorities to include template development and documentation requirements as needed and they will also ensure compliance in the use of all the authorities and upward reporting in the use of the authorities to the senior procurement official at the department.

And then office of grants and agreements, we'll be developing training that links existing authorities that we're already using to support the wildfire crisis strategy.

And in addition, the Office of grants and agreements has a comprehensive library of training that's already available at on the office of grants and agreement SharePoint, and I'll provide the link in the chat after I'm finished speaking.

And then for HRM, we talked about where I mentioned the, five CFR emergency direct hire authority There are plans to outline the steps on how to implement that so that's something that HRM will, be moving forward with. So stay tuned for a guide on that.

And so the last piece I wanna share before I go into my closing is that there are actions that have been taken by many of these directorates in business operations to support emergency determinations on priority firesheds and our priority landscapes in, in particular, And I share these examples so that if you want more information for your region or your unit, be welcome to reach out. So for example, PPS stewardship branch, has used existing authorities to do things like initiate over a hundred new contract actions with an estimated value exceeding three hundred and sixty in, including new actions across units and many of the regions and priority landscapes.

And that's all happened just in this fiscal year so far. They've engaged in high risk fire shed forest programs in region two five and six.

They formed a hundred and fifty new ten year, fifty million dollar forestry and engineering basic purchasing agreements and have initiated a first ever land management, integrated resources, contracts covering forty one in key industries, and more.

And in terms of the office of grants and agreements, the policy branch continues to work on the evolution of policy, as well as looking at new policy that can support the wild crisis strategy and implementation where authorized and feasible through agreements. And they continue to engage the field community of practice to ensure that understanding of the options to support implementing all of our accelerated work.

And I also wanna share that our missionaries senior program management staff with the help of PPS has implemented acquisition strategies to bring together integrated program teams, ensuring that existing acquisition vehicles are efficiently utilized with timely obligation of funds.

The process and the integrated team can also help identify opportunities to create new acquisition vehicles that can support landscape investments, as well as other BIL and IRA activities.

And so for closing, my I haven't asked for all of you. And that is where you have needs, make those known to us upfront as best as you can, whether it's contracts, agreements, hiring actions or CIO needs, bring all of those forward as soon as possible so we can be precise in developing strategies to meet your need. And we will take the tools we have to accommodate your needs as best as we can, but we'll lean on you to bring that project work forward so we can responsibly build a strategy to meet your need. And the intention here is not at all to be prescriptive, but more to how can we address, our solutions that we're providing.

An enterprise model. So that's all that I wanted to share, but I will flag that there are some business operation staff on the call right now. And so for the q and a, I just welcome you to, ask questions of that team. Thank you so much.

Back to you, Amanda.

Thank you for that wonderful presentation and thank you to all of our presenters. Now we're gonna move into our q and a time unless Chris had any closing words before we dive into that.

Yeah. I just I I wanna I wanna thank everyone, for the presentations and the discussion. So I know what you just heard was a lot. Yeah.

There was a lot there, and we're getting a lot of specific questions that are coming in. So I wanna simplify just a few things for everyone. One, yep, we've got we've got some things that we'll share after this, especially in the NIPA authorities and some others about the specifics of what you can ask for and how. And how do you do that?

There is it is important for individual for us that are making requests that they're collaborating with their regions before they come up to us that we we have that alignment.

And we will be pop publishing and putting together basically a toolbox.

Of the sorts of things that, will be available in all the areas that we talked about so you can see what that looks like. But at the simplest level, and the most important level is that if you have a a need or a project that is in one of these areas under this declaration. Those two hundred fifty fire sheds, those post fire areas in Arizona, New Mexico, California.

The main the main thing is ask.

Ask for what you need, whether it's an exception to our policy or exercising one of the authorities that you might have heard about, and we're gonna work with you and talk with you about it. There's a lot here will help simplify the process.

There's been a lot of questions that came in about. Can we add additional areas? Yes. We can add additional areas to this. We're probably gonna look at some regular basis to add that. We know for sure once the fire season occurs this year. That we will be making a request to the secretary to add to this declaration.

But for those of you that are asking for some things now, make the request to us, and we'll we'll take a look at that and and see what we can do. As you've heard from some of our presenters, some of these require that. Some of these we can use in a wider way, and we'll work with you on on what that can look like.

There's been some questions around, the specific parts of how you implement some of this. What we're really hoping today is to stir you to think differently to ask for the things that you need, and birth then for us to work with you and the regions to figure out solution sets that help you get there.

So, I I know we're gonna be sending things out right after this. They give you some, ideas of process. We're gonna be setting up the, the link so that you can be working with the SharePoint side how to make these requests, and then all of us are gonna be here to help you work through that. So let's open it up to the q and a, and we'll go from there.

Thank you, Chris. And I'm just gonna go through the chat questions. I know that you answered a lot of them in the chat. So if there's one that you've already addressed, that you just addressed, we can skip that. And then also if people would like to raise their hands, I'll call on people. But for now, we'll just go through a couple that I saw one question was, will portal actions be limited to the EAD polygons?

And that may be for, Linda or Steve, I believe.

Thanks, Amanda. I think that's actually, a a more comprehensive question that I've seen come up a couple of times in the chat and it relates to, you know, first of all, how do we know if we're in the polygons? I saw that come up a couple of times. And, and then are the actions restricted to the polygons?

So the secretary's declaration identified the two hundred and fifty high risk fire sheds and post fire recovery areas. And I think that's the term we're using or that that's that's where polygons are. But as Chris is as Chris mentioned, there is the ability to expand to other areas as needed. And, and we're working through that.

And so our ask to you is that if you have additional needs, if there are other areas, I saw a question in there, that was asking whether the entirety of the priority landscapes are included in this emergency declaration.

And, and for right now, you know, the it's only the two hundred and fifty fire sheds, but if you have a project, that that crosses over that, you know, that imaginary line, please, by all means, submit the project. Do do not, you know, limit yourself to just what's inside those polygons.

Yeah. That's exactly right. But I also wanna also be clear. This doesn't apply everywhere across the agency.

Right? This is twenty seven million acres that we that secretary has clicked declared there's an emergency situation on. And so we're gonna give greater consideration for those authorities that can only be applied there, like the bill, four zero eight zero seven authority. And I think what Linda brought up is is absolutely right.

If you cross a boundary, but you're within that, that's an area for consideration. So if you have a project that's completely outside of one of fire sheds or in one of those post fire recovery areas, we probably really can't consider you for that authority. Now some of the other authorities we have, we may be able to. But again, these are the areas that we're publicly saying there's an emergency in, that if we don't address fire in these high risk fire sheds, It's not gonna be everywhere in the agency.

Amanda, you're on mute.

Thank you.

Have a kind of a two part questions combining a few. Are we working with the advisory council on historic preservation to help SHPOs understand all these options. And then below that, there was, someone Judith was asking about She put in a request to their state SHPO since October for final comments, and they have not yet provided those. I follow-up weekly, and they gave me a date that they will on, but it does not occur. Any help on next processes.

Yeah. Thanks for those questions.

So, the the the we are working with the advisor, Kelsel, on North preservation and the National Conference of State historic preservation officers on ways to consider maybe some alternative process procedures or something like that in the context of these emergencies.

So, and, so we we may be able to come up with the with the with something specific to, that that is that we come up with that, kind of defines criteria that we can apply emergency. They they, you know, to consider as an emergency under the National Store Association Act under eight hundred point twelve under that part of the regulations that, that guide agencies when what to do in emergencies and, or maybe an another consideration of process. So, yes, the answer, we are consulting with the not National Conference State historic preservation officers and and the advisory council, all these emergencies.

So, what was the second question?

It was someone having a little bit of a hard time getting through with their state SHPO and wondering kinda what to do next.

You're certain certainly welcome to contact the the your regional heritage program manager. Question if it was a real program measure, but, and you're welcome to contact me and, or or, anybody in the in the national office, and we can see what we can do to help with that.

Thank you, Doug. And then Matt Schafer, I see you have your hand up if you'd like to come on, off mute and ask.

Yeah. Thank you, Amanda. I thought I'd mix it up and and come on screen. So thank you all for taking the time to share some great information. Why what what an exciting time to be in the agency?

I with all the different areas, program areas and directorates involved in and related to this is there going to be some sort of overarching body or organization that ensures

that there's consistent communication and coordination, or is should should we in the field try to ensure that we wrap in all the different areas, program areas if Like, for example, we have a NIPA question that also overlaps with, wildlife. Should we Should we coordinate and reach out to both EMC and the Wildlife program? Just EMC?

No. So so our our There's because we're trying to activate every part of the agency to help you, if we did that, it'd be it'd be chaos Matt. And so we need to put the ability to look at the requests no matter what you're asking, whether it's from the deepest side of things, or maybe it's from the contracting side of things.

And we the way that we're setting up this portal and the EMC is staffing it along with staffing that's coming from other deputy areas, our associate deputy chiefs are working on that right now. The intention is to give you a one stop portal where you make all these requests through. And then our job on the back end of that is to reach back to you with the appropriate staff to follow-up on the pieces and parts. So if you made a request that is on one hand about NIPA and another one's on consultation, you're gonna put that all within one request at the portal.

And then you're gonna have follow-up that may come from someone like Sarah, in the in our VPR staff about the consultation piece. And then you may have EMC follow-up with you on the pieces coming from EMC if there's necessary, follow-up. The intention is to make it as easy for the field as possible with a one stop sort of approach. It also gives us the ability to look at more system type changes that we need to make.

If we're getting consistent requests, in one area or not, we're if by doing it this way, we can start to see what that looks like and maybe create some sort of broader changes that are not just affecting your project it can be affecting a lot of projects. So that's the intent right now. That's why we're sending up the portal the way we are.

Okay. Thank you. You're welcome.

Alright. Another question from Charles, creating a project specific PA or using the phasing PA, especially the hip, would take longer than the actual emergency, is the plan to put these in place in the areas identified before the emergency.

You yes. Well, there's I can't speak for specific areas, but it's an option. You can certainly start. You can use it at the national phasing PA or begin developing a project specific PA, early. And we, in fact, we encourage, we encourage, you know, beginning to develop a the hair his implementation plan, the hip.

It's in the phasing PA to use to begin negotiating the content of the heritage implementation plate.

The hip as soon as possible is as early as possible. So, yes, it's an option.

Thank you.

Next question from Shasta Feronto. I'm confused about whether additional tribal consultation will be needed in addition to the national consultation underway. Can you clarify what the national consultation will cover? Is it just a scale question, Local tribes won't be included, so we need to make sure to get consulted. And if so, how does this differ from what we normally do?

So the national consultation is going to cover the emergency declaration itself.

And the issues surrounding that declaration, that national consultation will run for a total of sixty days. The emergency declaration gives the chief the ability to truncate that national consultation timeline. However, if you look at the White House's standards that were issued on December first. We're right in line with White House's requirements for consultation.

As for your question about field unit, and regional level, that consultation will have to happen as per normal.

Now under different authorities like NHPA or ESA or e p NIPA you have certain timelines and you have certain the certain ability to do, to do expedited consultation depending on the project itself. I reminded everybody that we still have the judiciary responsibility.

So what I would like to really do is just encourage you to it's like voting. Do it early and do it often. Reach out to the tribes. When you find yourself within an emergency fire shed landscape, that's your time to actually start to reach out to the tribes and talk about this. Our national consultation which we've already received some inquiries from tribes about will be to talk about the overall issue of the emergency declaration and how we ended up there. And then, it's still gonna be up to the units and to the forests and regions to consult on, to meet their their obligations.

That being the case, I've heard from a lot of tribes that they want this to happen that are willing and able to work The declaration asks you to use tribal equipment and personnel whenever you can. We have a lot of agreements that are gonna be out there available to you. There's a lot of money. And the tribes stand, willing to work with you on this. The challenge we have, of course, is the tribes have interests on the landscape that may be sacred.

Undoubtedly, that may be something they can't readily speak about unless it's threatened. So that's where your local relationships are going to be key. So for that,

effort, we've already staffed up a lot of the regions of higher tribal relations program managers. A lot of the forests are staffing up with tribal relations program.

Managers on the on their forests. Those relationships, I encourage you to, start paying attention to that and start to, foster those relationships as as much as you can. The tribes themselves we don't want them to think that we're just trying to go around them with an emergency. We're we're not.

We want them to be directly involved. The tribal nations, our sovereign nations that we work with need to be partners in this effort and here where I'm stationed right now on the Tonto, you know, we've seen fires just last year, a hundred and eighty thousand fire run on to the San Carlos res and burn up another hundred and thirty thousand acres. They are keen to do this work and we have the ability to help fund that. So but back to the portal.

So when you're, putting in your request, there will be a travel, consultation aspect to that portal. We here at OTR. And if you go back and look at the the Chiefs memo, we are going to be informed of these emergency action requests, and we're we're standing ready to help in any way that we can, but your local relationships are key. And so that's what I want to encourage you to do that.

You will have to consult. But remember tribes or sovereign nations, if they choose to consult or not, that's going to be up to them. That shouldn't stop you from working forward on your projects.

We do need to realize this is an emergency And so tribes also realize that as well and we're gonna have to work closely with them. But every relationship's different and so we stand ready here at OTR to assist in any way we can.

So I hope that answers your question.

Thank you, Richard.

Next question. Any plans for improve our ability to provide housing through stipends, facility upgrades, leasing, new builder others to increase our implementation capacity.

So I'll take that on. There is a lot of work occurring to address that.

It is outside of this set of actions and authorities, that we're talking about here specifically today.

There may be some things in this that you could ask for, but these are specifically targeted at the work we're doing to address the wildfire crisis strategy.

In our high risk fire sheds.

Having said that, I recognize, you know, how important this is for us, and we can certainly of contact you after this and get you in touch with, our business operations folks and other folks that are are working on this right now to address them.

Thanks.

Carrie, did you have anything to add? Oh, okay. Just popped on.

Oh, thank you.

Awesome.

Okay. For section forty eighty seven, will that Nipa proposed action be limited to the list of authorized actions in the law and associated connected actions. Or accustomed to integrating our work when feasible to make our analyses decisions go farther, also thinking about the interest in compensatory mitigation.

So if you're going to ask for the use of the authority, under bill, under four zero eight zero seven, there are a set of actions that it's limited to. And so I'm wondering if Linda or Steve can just pop on and talk about those.

We can't approve that authority for anything other than those actions the way that the bill is structured. Now there may be other things that we can do to help. Using other authorities, so you should certainly ask. But, Steve, can you go through those that list of, actions that under that one authority, the four zero eight zero seven authority that allows for action, no action, and no objection. What are what are the, the qualified actions that you can take?

Sure. And, thanks for that question. It's a great question.

It's a fairly long list, but I could run through it fairly, quickly.

It includes authorized actions like the salvage of dead or dying trees, harvest of trees damaged by winter ice, Commercial or noncommercial sanitation harvest of trees to control insects or disease, healthy or currently infested.

Reforestation or replanting of fire impacted areas, removal of hazardous trees in close proximity to roads or trails, hazardous fuels, restoration of water, and the last two duration of existing utility lines and replacement of underground cables.

Thank you, Steven.

And there's been a couple questions regarding communication.

So one is could there be a communication developed targeting information management staff to deliver a comprehensive GIS resource package And then later on, there's a question about, anyone helping with consistent talking points, facts, etcetera, so that we're all on the same page with this rollout and discussion with external. So if anyone could speak on general communication for this.

I'll take a stab and maybe Jacqueline can join me here, but so we developed a set of products we're gonna be rolling out here that go through some of the FAQs and some of the talking, some of the specifics of this. There was an email that or a memo that I sent out to all the regional foresters that sort of describes the decision, and what this is related to that we can certainly share as well. And then we're starting, you know, I can hear right now, like, the need for like that GIS product and other. So what I'd ask is if you see those sorts of needs and asks, let's have, let's have those request funneled up through to the regions just so we don't get a hundred different things. And then if the deputy regional foresters could communicate those needs to our associate deputy chief Jacqueline Manuel, who is is overseeing the implementation of that. We'll certainly work to create those communication materials.

So if you see something from your your your position within a region or a forest or district and you think there's a need for a communication material. Let's have you request that up through your regional contacts.

And have the deputy regional foresters request that to jack on, and then we'll work to put that together. K?

Jacqueline, is there any other communication materials that we're we're ready to go out with right now?

Well, I think that, we wanted to do this workshop, pretty soon after the secretary made the announcement of the eleven new priority landscape and the emergency declaration.

And we wanna work really closely with the RIT team that is helping oversee the priority landscape implementation work in and align with their workshop that they're having next week and make sure that we have good alignment before we come out with anything sort of in writing, but it's an iterative process. We know we're gonna have to talk about this and be consistent about it and be accurate about it. And, we're, we're gonna work on it together. So it's just gonna take us a little time to develop.

Alright.

Thank you both.

Next question, can you speak to how the high risk areas were designated, I would think that there would be overlap with the IND treatment areas authorized by section a two zero four of the culture act of twenty fourteen, but there doesn't appear to be much if any overlap.

Yeah, man. I could certainly talk to that. So one of the things that we wanna talk about here is that there's actually a whole set of efficiencies that you can use beyond these authorities. And one of those, and there was, you know, direction that we sent out last year that says, if you're in a high priority landscape, or one of these these high risk fire sheds, you should be starting with authorities that we have under the Healthy Forest Restoration Act, in the insect and disease designations to help you with efficiencies to comply with the National Environmental Policy Act.

This declaration, is based on, high risk fire. And the way that those fire sheds, the high the two fifty high risk fire sheds were developed is that working with our research, branch, they looked at where we had the the highest potential for, high intensity fire.

And then what was the critical exposure to, structures that was involved with that.

And that is the basis for those two hundred and fifty higher sheds. It's essentially where we have the highest potential and we have the highest exposure to, structures. Now I recognize there are a number of other needs that are out there that go beyond that. We can certainly catalog and and work with you on some of this.

But for this, emergency declaration for this twenty seven million acres. It is specifically in those two hundred fifty fire sheds, that were identified in the wildfire crisis strategy. It's a big deal. This is a lot of acres.

I recognize it doesn't hit every one of the needs you may see out there. But it is a game changer for a huge number, a huge amount of work that we have across the agency.

And I'm just gonna take, a really quick second here because I'm gonna run out of time. I'm gonna have to step away and answer, Jennifer Christie's question. You know, she said, hey, you know, when we're talking with some of our other regulatory agencies. They don't see this as an emergency, and they're not necessarily complying. As Sarah talked about earlier, as Doug talked about, we are having those conversations with the leadership of our regulatory agencies So they clearly know what we're doing and why. And we've heard some similar things there.

I personally talked with the director of the fish and wildlife service around this. We earned we are in close coordination to create that understanding. The other thing I

would say on the ESA side of things is that we're gonna really work with the work we're doing with them to help prioritize these things. But, for things like emergency consultation, we get to initiate that. And so if we give you the approval to move forward that, we're gonna make sure that we are aligning ourselves nationally with a leadership in fish and wildlife service. So they understand why and what we're doing.

As we were rolling out those initial emergency authorities when we used on the Sequoia groves, we didn't have all that aligned. We're working really hard to get that aligned now.

Thank you, Chris. Next confirming can the regions rely on emergency declaration for specific geographic areas as the basis to rely on the forest service own emergency nico regulations under twenty two two twenty dot four, such as alternative arrangements.

Okay. So this is one of those real tricky questions. It depends. Right? And so this is where it's really important that you make the request and we understand it.

The the authorities under four zero eight zero seven of the bill. This is for folks looking at the specificity for these nepa authorities. They can only be applied in these high priority, I'm sorry, these high risk fire sheds based on the secretary's determination.

Now the authority for a alternative arrangements that, we also could use that we described earlier that comes from our own regulations is not bound by that same determination.

However, we're going to try to look at it through that lens so that we're consistent. But you may ask to use that in another area as long as you have a rationale and a case for it. And I wanna be clear Any time that we're going to use alternative arrangements through our own NIPA regs, we'll go through a very specific briefing with the chief and will be made on a case by case briefing with the chief. The use of that authority will we are basically thinking right now it'll be much more judicial and rare compared to using the authority under four zero eight zero seven.

And so, whereas the four zero eight zero seven, we're gonna try to create some fairly quick turnarounds and review of that authority to give you that authority to do it. If you're requesting to use our own NIPA regulations, emergency, actions for alternative arrangements, That is a decision by the chief that will go through a very specific project level briefing, and we'll take, a lot more process than we consider gonna be much more rare. So I just wanna be clear with you all that that's gonna be an exception in here.

Okay. Thank you, Chris. Is your top line leader's intent on the use of EIS versus EA regarding expedited actions given the complexity of navigating FRN clearance consistent with taking emergency actions.

Well, I'd I'd open this up to Linder's D, but I'll just kinda answer it this way.

This is a conversation your EVA coordinators with your regional staff. You know, the decision to choose to do an EIS versus EIA is is essentially based on whether you know your action's gonna be significant.

Prior to even proposing it. You know, that's really what it comes down to. It would be, not appropriate for me to say you should all not do e a EISs and do EAs.

Because I don't know the specifics of your local situation. Now having said that, I think we do see a lot of cases where we are choosing to do EISs because we think it's the more legally defensible position.

Our instructions are for you to use the most efficient means to comply with all the laws that we have to comply with in a way that's legally sufficient and, and is as as as time efficient as we can.

But what our national direction is is that you should be using all the efficiency authorities that are available to you, whether they're and under the the Nipa guys, whether it's existing CEs, whether it's some of the actions under these new, emergency authorities, or if it's if it's looking at other administrative processes such as what we talked about with contracting, you should be exploring using any of those to help ex expedite your work but we're we are not going to mandate a certain level of neither nepa to you.

And the next few questions seem to have a yes or no answer. Do these authorities have an expiration date?

There is not necessarily an expiration date. Right, Steve, on the four zero eight zero seven authority. The others do not that I'm aware of, but we have committed to create reporting back to the secretary on a regular basis and the way the last decision was written. Am I correct on that, Steve?

Mhmm. Yep.

Was the secretary of interior given these same authorities?

Steve. Did four zero eight zero seven apply here? To interior as well.

I'm watching the chat. I'm doing too much multitasking. Can you repeat the question, please?

Did did the Did the four zero eight zero seven authorities under Bill apply to both secretary's interior ag, or was it just ag?

Oh, that is a good question. I'd have to check.

I think Do you know, Josh?

Just as It's just it's just, secretary of agriculture. Thanks.

Alright. And I think those are the last questions that I see in the chat right now as I see couple of them have been answered, since I last looked. So if anyone wanted to provide any closing remarks, I think can wrap this up?

I will do that. So thank you for joining us.

As I started off with here, there is an expectation that in these high risk fire sheds, and in these post fire recovery areas that we're gonna act differently as an agency.

We're gonna show up and act in a way that addresses the emergency that we see.

I hope that this conversation today spurred some thinking for you and your forest and your regions about where this could be helpful and applicable.

We are dedicated here nationally to create a single point of entry for use that you can make these requests and we're being responsive in our follow ups. I am sure as we go into this that, some things are gonna go super well and some things may have some hiccups. We'll learn from that. We'll adapt and we'll we'll address those things.

We're all the same team here, and we wanna create a space for you to do this work transparently, collaboratively, informed by our tribes expeditiously.

It's the only way we know that we can move things going forward. And I think this case great opportunities for those of you that have high risk fire sheds or post fire recovery areas that are outside of the priority landscape. For for being able to move, projects more efficiently through. We're here to help.

We're going to to do our best to be as responsive as we can going from this. And if you've got any questions or focus and especially from the regions, as I said, our ADC cadre, our associate deputy G cadre, and on this particular piece led by Jack on a manual, please bring those forward to us, and we'll be as responsive as we can going forward.

Thanks for your time. I know this was recorded.

If you feel like we need to do, I know we have a specific NIPA one that we're gonna be following up with, but if you see a need for us to continue to do some more of this, let us know. And we'll make ourselves available to do that. Have a good afternoon, and thanks for your time today.

Thank you all and the recording will be posted, as soon as it gets done loading. So look forward to seeing that.

And Any last words, Jacqueline?

Thank you, Amanda, for facilitating us. And thank you, everybody, for taking the time with us. Bye. Thank you