

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

COMMITTEES:
APPROPRIATIONS
COMMERCE
HEALTH, EDUCATION,
LABOR, AND PENSIONS

April 24, 2023

The Honorable Christine Wormuth
Secretary of the Army
U.S. Department of Defense
101 Army Pentagon
Washington, DC 20310

Dear Secretary Wormuth:

I write to you today to inquire about the Army's risk assessment and mitigation measures for prescribed burns on installations. I am also requesting additional information regarding the recent wildland fires on Fort McCoy's north and south borders, as well as results of the investigation into the cause of the outbreaks.

I am aware that no definitive cause of the fires has been determined yet and that the investigation is ongoing. Nevertheless, it is reported that Fort McCoy had been conducting prescribed burns in the area to control brush and other plants, and to prepare training areas for the summer influx of military units, when fires broke out on April 12th. It took emergency services two days to extinguish the almost 3,000-acre fire. I am particularly concerned because the Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources placed central and southern portions of Wisconsin, including the area around Fort McCoy, under a "very high" fire danger risk on April 10. Governor Evers had declared a state of emergency due to fire danger risk on April 12th, the day the prescribed burns took place.

- 1. What authority level approves prescribed burns at the varying levels of assessed risk?**
- 2. Can you describe the Department of the Army's regulations for risk assessment in the context of prescribed burns, including any calculation measures utilized to assess associated risks? How does the Army apply this risk assessment measure to other activities that pose a fire hazard, such as pyrotechnic training?**
- 3. How does the Army coordinate with state agencies, such as the Department of Natural Resources, when conducting prescribed burns and other activities that pose a risk to the environment (such as weapons ranges, live fire exercises, etc.)?**
- 4. With the fires at Fort McCoy now 100% contained, what is the Army is doing to clean up the area and measure the environmental impact and damage? What resources are being allocated to support the aftermath of the fires?**

I appreciate your timely response to this request, and further request the full results of the investigation into the April 12th fires once complete. It is imperative that we protect the areas both in and around our military installations, and that the Department of Defense use all resources available to ensure appropriate risk mitigation when conducting operations that have a direct impact on the environment and communities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tammy Baldwin". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T".

Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator