

Audit: Feds should shift firefighting burden in Calif.

By Michael Doyle, McClatchy Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Forest Service apparently overpaid for fighting some of California’s biggest wildland fires and was saddled with too many of the toughest areas to work in, federal investigators now say.

Citing expenditures that “may have been questionable and unreasonable,” the Agriculture Department’s Office of Inspector General questioned more than \$4.5 million in administrative costs that the federal agency paid to local firefighting agencies within California.

“There was no assurance these costs were reasonable and accurate,” the investigators noted.

More broadly, investigators said an agreement with the state left the Forest Service shouldering an unequal share of areas where wildlands meet urban areas, the costliest to protect.

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