

PARTNER CAUCUS on FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING SOLUTIONS

JUNE 13, 2016

The Honorable Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senate
SH-709 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi
U.S. Senate
SR-379A Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senate
SH-511 Hart Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders
U.S. Senate
SD-332 Dirksen Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Murkowski, Chairman Enzi, Ranking Member Cantwell, and Ranking Member Sanders,

The undersigned organizations represent the Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions, comprised of a diverse group of international, national and local organizations. The caucus is seeking a comprehensive solution to the wildfire suppression funding issue. We appreciate the Committee's attention to the fire funding challenge and the opportunity to comment on the Senate Committee on Energy and Natural Resources' discussion draft.

Historically, the need for transfers of funding from non-fire programs has limited the ability for the Department of the Interior and USDA Forest Service to suppress wildfires without impacting budgets of other fire prevention and management programs. Of more concern is how the increasing ten-year average for wildfire suppression has augmented this funding problem. Longer fire seasons, increasing development in the wildland-urban interface, and increased fuel loads are among the many factors that contribute to wildfire suppression costs.

The fire funding solution in the Committee's discussion draft proposes to significantly decrease the need to transfer when appropriated funding is spent, but it's a partial fix to addressing the impacts from rising wildland firefighting costs. This draft does not address the larger problem of shifting funding from non-fire programs to fire programs, resulting from the way firefighting funds are calculated, budgeted, and allocated. While the draft's proposed funding to preventative programs and forest management reforms may be effective in decreasing suppression costs in the long run, an immediate budgetary solution is still needed to stop the problems associated with the rapidly increasing ten-year average. As that ten-year average used to calculate suppression increases and as budgets remain relatively flat, less is available for forest management and restoration, research, recreation and other critical private and public land objectives.

A comprehensive fire funding fix would 1) address the continued erosion of agency budgets that results from the increasing ten-year average and stabilize the level of funding for suppression within the agencies; 2) access disaster funding for extraordinarily costly fires, including those

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that may be calculated as part of the ten-year average, and; 3) significantly reduce the need to transfer from non-suppression accounts and programs. To meet all these criteria, we recommend the draft be amended

to fund suppression at 70 percent of the ten-year average, similar to the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, or freezing the ten-year average, and accessing disaster funding for levels beyond.

Thank you for your consideration and important discussion of wildfire suppression funding issues and we look forward to continuing to work together.

Sincerely,

Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solution

For information regarding this letter or members of the Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions, please contact Cecilia Clavet, cclavet@tnc.org, 703-841-7425.

List of Partner Caucus Signers:

American Camp Association	Flathead Economic Policy Center
American Forests	Forest Business Network
American Hiking Society	Forest Stewards Guild
Appalachian Mountain Club	Great Old Broads for Wilderness
Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council	Hipcamp
Audubon Society of New Hampshire	Idaho Forest Owners Association
Back Country Horsemen of America	Idaho Forest Restoration Partnership
Black Hills Forest Resource Association	Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association
Black Hills Regional Multiple Use Coalition	Intermountain Forest Association
Blue Goose Alliance	International Association of Wildland Fire
Choose Outdoors	Klamath Forest Alliance
City of Ashland, Oregon	Lake County Resources Initiative
Coalition for the Upper South Platte	Little Colorado River Plateau RC&D Area
Colorado Timber Industry Association	Lomakatsi Restoration Project
Conservation Legacy	McKinley Soil and Water Conservation District
Conservation Northwest	Minnesota Forestry Association
Conservatives for Responsible Stewardship	Montana Conservation Corps
Dahl Environmental Services, LLC	Montana Wilderness Association
Defenders of Wildlife	Montrose Forest Products, LLC
Ecosystem Workforce Program	Mt. Taylor Manufacturing
End of Road Enterprises	Muskingum Lakes Chapter, Buckeye Trail Association
Environmental and Energy Study Institute	National Association of Conservation Districts
Epic-Environmental Protection Information Center	National Association of Forest Service Retirees

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National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds
National Association of State Foresters
National Association of University Forest Resources Programs
National Federation of Federal Employees
National Parks Conservation Association
National Ski Areas Association
National Wildfire Institute
National Wildlife Federation
National Wildlife Refuge Association
New Mexico Forest Industry Association
Northwest Youth Corps
Outdoor Alliance
Outdoor Industry Association
Partnership for the National Trails System
Project Wildfire
Public Lands Alliance
Public Lands Foundation
Public Lands Partnership
Public Lands Service Coalition
Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation
Quality Deer Management Association
Salmon Valley Stewardship
Salmonid Homebrew Club
Shining Horizons Land Management
Sierra Business Council
Sierra Club
Sierra Forest Legacy
Sierra Pacific Industries
Siulaw Institute, Inc.
Society for the Protection of NH Forests
Society of American Foresters
South Dakota ATV/UTV Association
Southern Environmental Law Center
Southern Oregon Climate Action Now
Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative
Spatial Interest, LLC
Stewards of the Sierra National Forest

Superior Hiking Trail Association
Sustainable Northwest
Swan Valley Connections
Texas Forestry Association
The Conservation Fund
The Corps Network
The Mountain Pact
The Nature Conservancy
The Trust for Public Land
The Wildlife Society
Trout Unlimited
Trout Unlimited New Mexico Council
Vail Resorts
Vermont Woodlands Association
Wallowa Resources
Washington Trails Association
Watershed Research & Training Center
Wildlife Forever
Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association Inc.