

PARTNER CAUCUS on FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING SOLUTIONS

OCTOBER 5, 2017

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
Majority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Charles Schumer
Minority Leader
United States Senate

The Honorable Paul Ryan
Speaker
United States House of Representatives

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Minority Leader
United States House of Representatives

Dear Leader McConnell, Speaker Ryan, Leader Schumer, and Leader Pelosi:

The undersigned organizations represent the Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions. The Partner Caucus seeks a comprehensive solution to the wildfire suppression funding issue that addresses the borrowing issue *and* the erosion of budgets due to increasing wildfire suppression costs. We urge Congress to support the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (WDFA) (H.R. 2862; S. 1842), a bipartisan bill that solves this critical issue.

In January 2009, our diverse coalition of organizations came together to find a solution to the repeated fire transfers and corresponding reductions to other agency programs – many of which reduce long-term fire risk. The Partner Caucus represents a diverse set of international, national, and local organizations interested in sustainable land management on private, tribal, municipal, state, and federal lands.

Longer fire seasons, increased development in the wildland-urban interface, and millions of acres of forests with increased fuel loads are among the many factors contributing to increased costs of wildfire response in the United States. This creates a crippling burden on the Department of the Interior (DOI) and the USDA Forest Service's (U.S. Forest Service) land management functions as the agencies shift resources to fund essential suppression activities – effectively delaying and terminating projects that improve forest resilience and reduce wildfire risk. In the last several years, more than 50 percent of the U.S. Forest Service's budget has been consumed by fighting wildfires. Consequently, landscape management has been negatively impacted across all lands including national forests and DOI lands, such as our national parks and state and private lands.

Many proposals in past years would ban the practice of transferring additional funds when appropriated funding is spent, but that is only a partial fix for addressing the impacts of rising wildland firefighting costs. These proposals do not address the larger problem of wildfire suppression costs consuming greater portions of the U.S. Forest Service budget over time. As the 10-year average that is used to calculate suppression costs increases, and

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as budgets remain relatively flat, funding is being shifted from non-fire programs to pay for fire. This results in fewer dollars 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 10-year average and stabilize the level of funding for suppression within the agencies, 2) access disaster funding for extraordinarily costly fires, and 3) significantly reduce the need to transfer from non-suppression accounts and programs. The WDFA satisfies these three criteria by funding fire suppression in the U.S. Forest Service and DOI budgets at the 10-year average from 2015 and then providing access to disaster funding through a budget cap adjustment for levels beyond that amount. Freezing the 10-year average offers agencies and land managers more predictable and consistent budgets as they try to implement and execute successful programs and projects that benefit forests and communities across the United States.

We urge you to support the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act. It is imperative that Congress take action this year to solve this critical issue, and the Partner Caucus stands ready to work with you and your colleagues toward this goal.

Sincerely,

Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions

List of 205 Partner Caucus Signers:

1. ACCESS FUND
2. ALASKA WILDERNESS LEAGUE
3. ALLEGHENY HARDWOOD UTILIZATION GROUP, INC.
4. ALLIANCE FOR COMMUNITY TREES
5. ALLIANCE OF LANDOWNER ASSOCIATIONS
6. AMERICAN ALPINE CLUB
7. AMERICAN CANOE ASSOCIATION
8. AMERICAN FOREST FOUNDATION
9. AMERICAN FORESTS
10. AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY
11. AMERICAN SOCIETY OF CONSULTING ARBORISTS
12. AMERICAN SPORTFISHING ASSOCIATION
13. AMERICAN WHITEWATER
14. AMERICAN WOODCOCK SOCIETY

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.

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15. AMERICAN YOUTHWORKS
16. APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB
17. APPLGATE PARTNERSHIP AND WATERSHED COUNCIL
18. ARBOR DAY FOUNDATION
19. ARID LAND INNOVATION
20. ARIZONA CONSERVATION CORPS
21. ARIZONA TRAIL ASSOCIATION
22. ASSOCIATION OF CALIFORNIA WATER AGENCIES
23. AUDUBON WASHINGTON
24. BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF AMERICA
25. BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF NORTH CAROLINA
26. BACK COUNTRY HORSEMEN OF WESTERN NORTH CAROLINA
27. BLACKFOOT CHALLENGE
28. BLUE GOOSE ALLIANCE
29. BLUE MOUNTAINS FOREST PARTNERS
30. BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB
31. BOULDER COUNTY COMMISSIONERS' OFFICE
32. BOULDER COUNTY, CO
33. BRL LOGGING
34. CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CORPS
35. CALIFORNIA FARM BUREAU FEDERATION
36. CALIFORNIA NATIVE PLANT SOCIETY
37. CALIFORNIA SKI INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
38. CALIFORNIA URBAN FORESTS COUNCIL
39. CAROLINA CLIMBERS COALITION
40. CENTER FOR SIERRA NEVADA CONSERVATION
41. CENTRAL IDAHO RANGELANDS NETWORK
42. CHOOSE OUTDOORS
43. CHUMSTICK WILDFIRE STEWARDSHIP COALITION
44. CITY OF ASHLAND, OR
45. CLACKAMAS COUNTY, OR
46. CLEARWATER RESOURCE COUNCIL
47. COLORADO MOUNTAIN CLUB
48. COLORADO YOUTH CORPS ASSOCIATION
49. CONNECTICUT FOREST & PARK ASSOCIATION
50. CONSERVATION LANDS FOUNDATION
51. CONSERVATION LEGACY
52. CONSERVATION NORTHWEST
53. CT BIOENERGY CONSULTING

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54. DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE
55. DELAWARE NATURE SOCIETY
56. DELTA WATERFOWL
57. ECOSYSTEM MANAGEMENT RESEARCH INSTITUTE
58. ECOSYSTEM WORKFORCE PROGRAM
59. EL SENDERO BACKCOUNTRY SKI AND SNOWSHOE CLUB
60. ENVIRONMENTAL AND ENERGY STUDY INSTITUTE
61. EVERGREEN MOUNTAIN BIKE ALLIANCE
62. FLATHEAD ECONOMIC POLICY CENTER
63. FLORIDA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
64. FOREST BUSINESS NETWORK
65. FOREST FIRE LOOKOUT ASSOCIATION
66. FOREST LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION
67. FOREST STEWARDS GUILD
68. FOUR FOREST RESTORATION INITIATIVE, AZ
69. FRAMING OUR COMMUNITY
70. FRIENDS OF BELL MEADOW
71. FRIENDS OF THE INYO
72. FRIENDS OF THE URBAN FOREST
73. GEORGIA FORESTWATCH
74. GEORGIA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
75. GILA TREE THINNERS
76. GREAT APPALACHIAN VALLEY CONSERVATION CORPS
77. GREAT BASIN INSTITUTE
78. GREAT OLD BROADS FOR WILDERNESS
79. GREATER FLAGSTAFF FORESTS PARTNERSHIP
80. GREATER YELLOWSTONE COALITION
81. GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE CENTER INC.
82. HOOSIER ENVIRONMENTAL COUNCIL
83. IDAHO CONSERVATION LEAGUE
84. IDAHO FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION
85. ILLINOIS VALLEY SOIL AND WATER CONSERVATION DISTRICT
86. INDIANA FORESTRY & WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION
87. INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FIRE FIGHTERS (IAFF)
88. INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WILDLAND FIRE
89. INTERNATIONAL MOUNTAIN BICYCLING ASSOCIATION
90. KS WILD
91. LAKE COUNTY RESOURCES INITIATIVE
92. LASSEN FOREST PRESERVATION GROUP

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93. LEWIS AND CLARK TRUST, INC.
94. LITTLE BEAR FOREST REFORM COALITION
95. LITTLE COLORADO RIVER PLATEAU RC&D AREA, INC.
96. LITTLE COLORADO RIVER PLATEAU RC&D AREA, INC. INCLUDING SOUTHWEST
SUSTAINABLE FOREST PARTNERSHIP
97. LOMAKATSI RESTORATION PROJECT
98. LOS PADRES FORESTWATCH
99. LOUISIANA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
100. MAZAMAS
101. MICHAEL T. RAINS CONSULTING
102. MICHIGAN SNOWSPORTS INDUSTRIES ASSOCIATION
103. MINNESOTA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
104. MONTANA CONSERVATION CORPS
105. MONTANA WILDERNESS ASSOCIATION
106. MONTANA WOOD PRODUCTS ASSOCIATION
107. MOUNTAIN HIGH RESORT
108. NATIONAL ALLIANCE OF FOREST OWNERS
109. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FOREST SERVICE RETIREES
110. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RV PARKS & CAMPGROUNDS
111. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS
112. NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY FOREST RESOURCES PROGRAMS
113. NATIONAL DEER ALLIANCE
114. NATIONAL FOREST HOMEOWNERS
115. NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
116. NATIONAL SKI AREAS ASSOCIATION
117. NATIONAL WILDFIRE INSTITUTE
118. NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION
119. NATIONAL WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION
120. NATURAL RESOURCES COUNCIL OF MAINE
121. NEW HAMPSHIRE AUDUBON
122. NEW JERSEY AUDUBON
123. NEZ PERCE TRAIL FOUNDATION
124. NORTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
125. NORTH CENTRAL WASHINGTON FOREST HEALTH COLLABORATIVE
126. NORTH COUNTRY TRAIL ASSOCIATION
127. NORTHERN FOREST CENTER
128. NORTHWEST YOUTH CORPS
129. OKANOGAN CONSERVATION DISTRICT
130. OLD WOOD LLC

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131. OUTDOOR ALLIANCE
132. OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION
133. PACIFIC CREST TRAIL ASSOCIATION
134. PACIFIC NORTHWEST SKI AREAS ASSOCIATION
135. PALMETTO AGRIBUSINESS COUNCIL
136. PARTNERSHIP FOR THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM
137. PHEASANTS FOREVER & QUAIL FOREVER
138. PINCHOT INSTITUTE FOR CONSERVATION
139. PLJ SERVICES LLC
140. PORTNEUF RESOURCE COUNCIL
141. PUBLIC LANDS ALLIANCE
142. PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION
143. PUBLIC LANDS INTERPRETIVE ASSOCIATION
144. PUBLIC LANDS PARTNERSHIP
145. QUAIL AND UPLAND WILDLIFE FEDERATION
146. QUALITY DEER MANAGEMENT ASSOCIATION
147. REI Co-op
148. ROCKY MOUNTAIN ELK FOUNDATION
149. ROCKY MOUNTAIN RECREATION INITIATIVE
150. ROOT CAUSE
151. RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY
152. SALMON VALLEY STEWARDSHIP
153. SAN JUAN CITIZENS ALLIANCE
154. SAN LUIS VALLEY ECOSYSTEM COUNCIL
155. SAVE THE REDWOODS LEAGUE
156. SIERRA BUSINESS COUNCIL
157. SIERRA CLUB
158. SIERRA FOREST LEGACY
159. SIERRA INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY AND THE ENVIRONMENT
160. SITKA CONSERVATION SOCIETY
161. SIUSLAW INSTITUTE
162. SKI UTAH
163. SOCIETY FOR THE PROTECTION OF NH FORESTS
164. SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS
165. SOUTH CAROLINA WILDLIFE FEDERATION
166. SOUTHEAST CONSERVATION CORPS
167. SOUTHERN OREGON CLIMATE ACTION NOW
168. SOUTHERN OREGON FOREST RESTORATION COLLABORATIVE
169. SOUTHWEST CONSERVATION CORPS

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- 170.SPATIAL INTEREST, LLC
- 171.STUDENT CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION
- 172.SUSTAINABLE NORTHWEST
- 173.SUSTAINABLE URBAN FORESTS COALITION
- 174.SWAN VALLEY CONNECTIONS
- 175.TEXAS FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
- 176.THE CONSERVATION FUND
- 177.THE CORPS NETWORK
- 178.THE MOUNTAIN PACT
- 179.THE MOUNTAINEERS
- 180.THE NATURE CONSERVANCY
- 181.THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND
- 182.THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY
- 183.THE WILDLIFE SOCIETY
- 184.THEODORE ROOSEVELT CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP
- 185.TROUT UNLIMITED
- 186.TULEYOME
- 187.TUOLUMNE RIVER TRUST
- 188.UNCOMPAHGRE PARTNERSHIP
- 189.VAIL RESORTS
- 190.VERMONT WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION
- 191.VIRGINIA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION
- 192.WALLOWA RESOURCES
- 193.WASHINGTON RESOURCE CONSERVATION & DEVELOPMENT COUNCIL
- 194.WASHINGTON TRAILS ASSOCIATION
- 195.WATERSHED RESEARCH & TRAINING CENTER
- 196.WEST VIRGINIA RIVERS COALITION
- 197.WESTERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER
- 198.WESTERN LANDOWNERS ALLIANCE
- 199.WILD SALMON CENTER
- 200.WILDERNESS WORKSHOP
- 201.WILDLIFE FOREVER
- 202.WILDLIFE MISSISSIPPI
- 203.WINTER WILDLANDS ALLIANCE
- 204.WISCONSIN WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION INC.
- 205.WYOMING STOCK GROWERS ASSOCIATION