



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives

September 21, 2022

Regional Forester Frank Beum
United States Forest Service
Rocky Mountain Region
1617 Cole Blvd., Building 17
Lakewood, CO 80401

Dear Mr. Beum,

Thank you for your leadership since you joined the Rocky Mountain Region. I'm writing regarding the allocation of wildfire mitigation resources from the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, or Bipartisan Infrastructure Law.

As you know, the Forest Service announced a 10-year wildfire strategy earlier this year, using resources provided by the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law to focus on high-risk "firesheds" – large, forested landscapes with a high likelihood that ignition could expose homes, communities, infrastructure, and natural resources to wildfire.

I appreciate and respect the Forest Service's endeavors to mitigate wildfire risk by allocating resources in the most strategic way possible. I also appreciate the much-needed attention that the agency is providing to Colorado's Front Range – portions of which sit in my district – as you work to deploy \$3 billion in Bipartisan Infrastructure Law funding to reduce hazardous fuels, restore forests and grasslands, and invest in fire-adapted communities and post-fire reforestation.

As you move forward in this work, in partnership with the State of Colorado through its 2020 Forest Action Plan, I respectfully request that you also give high priority consideration to wildfire mitigation in the White River National Forest and the western portion of the Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests, in recognition of their critical economic, ecological, and social importance. As you may know, these areas are home to the headwaters of the Colorado River, the most heavily traveled east-west interstate highway in Colorado, and some of the most-visited recreational resources in the country.

High-elevation forests in the Upper Colorado River Basin are perilously vulnerable to wildfire, which is creating substantial flood risks to the built environment—including water supply infrastructure—impacting the quality and quantity of water supplies, impairing aquatic ecosystems, and degrading cherished recreational resources. One of the most notable threats to infrastructure in this region from wildfire is its impact on Interstate 70. Annual traffic counts through the Eisenhower-Johnson Memorial Tunnels exceed 13 million freight and personal

vehicles per year, representing billions of dollars in economic activity for communities across the state. This summer, monsoon rains on the Grizzly Creek Fire burn scar have caused I-70 closures through Glenwood Canyon as often as four times per week, severely impacting local and interstate travel and commerce. It is imperative that we allocate sufficient resources to reduce wildfire risk in this vital watershed and transportation corridor, in addition to the other priority areas identified.

At least seven major Colorado ski areas sit within areas that are not currently included in the initial landscape investments designated by the Forest Service. These recreational resources serve as economic engines for the entire state, generating billions of dollars in annual economic output and tens of thousands of jobs. As the Upper Colorado region and our nation continue to endure the ongoing impacts of climate change, including historic drought and larger, more destructive wildfires, we cannot afford to delay robust investments in wildfire mitigation to protect this region's many resources and values.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to hearing from you soon.

Sincerely,



Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

cc:

Chief Randy Moore, United States Forest Service
Matt McCombs, Director, Colorado State Forest Service
Dan Gibbs, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Natural Resources
Scott Fitzwilliams, Supervisor, White River National Forest
Monte Williams, Supervisor, Arapaho and Roosevelt National Forests and Pawnee National Grassland