

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20510

April 29, 2022

The Honorable Chellie Pingree
Chair
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

The Honorable Dave Joyce
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment, and
Related Agencies
Committee on Appropriations
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chair Pingree and Ranking Member Joyce:

We write to ask that you provide robust funding to programs in the Interior and Environment Appropriations Bill that will support improved wildfire preparedness, mitigation, and response across the United States.

We are no longer seeing fire seasons, but instead fire years—continuing to have record-setting and dangerous fires across the United States year after year. The National Interagency Fire Center reported that U.S. wildfires burned 7.125 million acres in 2021. In 2020, wildfires burned 10.12 million acres—the highest yearly total since accurate records began in 1983. Colorado experienced the most destructive wildfire in the state’s history in December 2021—which was also the most destructive fire of the year—and fires in California accounted for the largest number of structures lost in one state with 2,031 residences and even more commercial and other structures burned. Fire damage does not end when the fire is over, for example communities in Utah are still dealing with the consequences of the disastrous fires in 2018 in addition to new fires every year. Because of the damage these catastrophic wildfires leave in their wake, recovery programs are critical to our communities.

According to research from Stanford University¹, the indirect death toll due to inhalation of wildfire smoke is estimated to be in the thousands. Authors of the study estimate that wildfire smoke likely is responsible for 5,000 to 15,000 deaths in an average year in the U.S.


Such a historic challenge requires a proportionate response. We implore you to provide robust funding to programs that help address the many wildfire preparedness, response, and recovery challenges our nation faces today. This includes the urgent need to increase the pace and scale of hazardous fuels management and forest restoration; improve ecosystem health; reduce the risk of severe flooding and erosion in forests after fire; protect critical watersheds; and bolster support for the wildland firefighting workforce.

¹ <https://siepr.stanford.edu/research/publications/managing-growing-cost-wildfire>

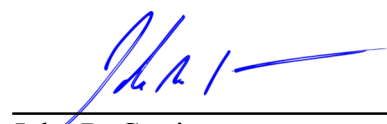
We encourage the committee to consider both the short- and long-term causes of wildfire and to fund programs that support forest health – including investments in research being done at federal laboratories and research institutions across the country to ensure that the best available science is used in wildfire mitigation, response, and recovery, is a priority.

Thank you for your consideration of our request.

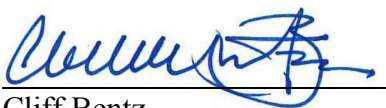
Sincerely,



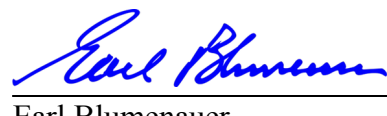
Joe Neguse
Member of Congress




John R. Curtis
Member of Congress



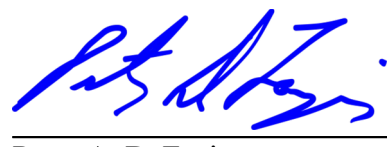
Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress



Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



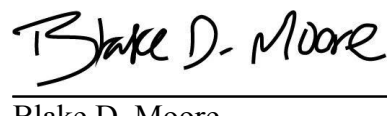
Jason Crow
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