

**Written Public Testimony from Members of the Fire Suppression  
Funding Solutions Partner Caucus**

**Submitted to the House Committee on Appropriations  
Subcommittee on Interior, Environment and Related Agencies**

**April 3, 2014**

The undersigned organizations, members of the Fire Suppression Funding Solutions Partner Caucus, urge the Committee to address the vexing issue of wildfire suppression funding in fiscal year (FY) 2015 appropriations. We respectfully request that the Committee correct this wildfire suppression funding issue by including language from the bipartisan Wildfire Disaster Funding Act (WDFDA- H.R. 3992; S. 1875) in the FY 2015 Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies appropriations bill. This language provides the structure to fund a portion of the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and Department of the Interior (DOI) wildfire suppression costs through a budget cap adjustment under the Balanced Budget and Emergency Deficit Control Act of 1985, as amended. This would provide the USFS and DOI with a funding structure similar to that used by other agencies who respond to natural disaster emergencies.

The Partner Caucus is a diverse coalition of organizations brought together in January of 2009 to find a solution to the impacts of increasing suppression costs on land management agencies. Our coalition includes national and local organizations, state forestry, environmentalists, outdoor and recreation industry, sportsmen, timber industry, local governments and many other groups interested in federal lands.

Our organizations are concerned current spending levels for the suppression and FLAME accounts will not be sufficient for FY 15 and certainly not- sustainable over the long term. - . The current wildfire suppression funding model and cycle of transfers and repayments has negatively impacted the ability to implement forest management activities. The agencies and first responders need a predictable, stable, and efficient budget structure to deliver their congressionally directed land management missions.

Numerous fire seasons over the past decade have required fire funding transfers from non-suppression accounts, clearly demonstrating the urgent need to change the suppression funding model at the USFS and DOI. The last few fiscal years have increasingly reflected the need for a new funding approach:

*FY 2012 and FY 2013*

Carry-over levels in the FLAME accounts were rescinded in FY 2012, suppression was funded below the forecast, and the fire season was very costly, particularly at the end of the fiscal year. Suppression was also funded below the ten-year average in FY 2013 and the fire season was once again very costly. Over \$1 billion were transferred from USFS and DOI programs at the end of FY 2012 and FY 2013 combined.

In the past, repayments of transfers occurred through emergency supplemental appropriations, which would occur well after the USFS and DOI Bureaus had been severely

impacted by the transfers. However, FY 2012 and FY 2013 suppression transfers were “repaid” from the entire Interior bill for the following fiscal year. The result is that all Interior agencies and their programs are now impacted by suppression funding. Additionally, the transfers have had long lasting effects on the USFS’ and DOI’s implementation of impacted programs that continue to this day.

#### *FY 2014*

Suppression is funded at the full ten-year average. However, with the increasing drought conditions across the Nation, the FY 2014 fire season is expected to be particularly active and costly. There is every indication that the USFS and DOI will run out of suppression funds and be forced to transfer before the end of the season.

This pattern of funding is neither efficient nor sustainable. The Wildfire Disaster Funding bill would provide the USFS and DOI with a funding structure similar to that used by other agencies that respond to natural disaster emergencies, which have budget cap exemptions for a portion of disaster funding. This important change would free the agencies to reinvest in core activities which have been reduced in recent years due to a continued shift of limited resources to fund wildfire suppression, including the very programs that would help to decrease wildfire costs over time. Further, this change would end the highly disruptive process of canceling and/or significantly delaying ongoing project work, most often at the time such work is being executed on the ground.

We appreciate this Committee’s attention to this increasing and unsustainable natural resource challenge. The FY 2015 appropriations bill can provide for both necessary wildfire suppression and also fire risk reduction activities that create jobs and reduce firefighting costs in the long run. We are prepared to help and look forward to assisting Congress in developing a sustainable and long-term solution to fund emergency wildfire suppression.

The following are groups supporting the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act:

- 3 Legs Collaboration Services
- Alamo Navajo School Board, Inc.
- Allegheny Hardwood Utilization Group
- Alliance for Community Trees
- American Bird Conservancy
- American Canoe Association
- American Farm Bureau Federation
- American Forest & Paper Association
- American Forest Foundation
- American Forest Resource Council
- American Forests
- American Hiking Society
- American Loggers Council
- Appalachian Mountain Club
- Applegate Partnership and Watershed Council
- Arid Land Innovation
- Arizona Fire Chiefs Association
- Arizona Prescribed Fire Council
- Arizona Wildlife Federation
- Association of Fish and Wildlife Agencies
- Association of National Grasslands
- Black Hills Forest Resource Association
- Black Hills Regional Multiple Use Coalition
- Black Hills Resource, Conservation, and Development
- Blue Mountains Forest Partners
- Boulder County
- BRL Logging
- California Fire Safe Council
- California Forestry Association
- California Ski Industry Association

- Central Oregon Intergovernmental Council
- Choose Outdoors
- Clearwater Resource Council
- Colorado Timber Industry Association
- Congressional Sportsmen's Foundation
- Conservation Northwest
- Criley Consulting
- Defenders of Wildlife
- Eastern Arizona Counties Organization
- Ecosystem Workforce Program
- El Tesoro Retreat Center
- Endangered Species Coalition
- Estrada Collaborative Resource Management, LLC
- Federal Forest Resource Coalition
- Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology (FUSEE)
- Flagstaff Fire Department
- Flathead Economic Policy Center
- Foothill Conservancy
- Forest Business Network
- Forest County Economic Development Partnership
- Forest Energy Corporation
- Forest Guild
- Forest Health Task Force
- Four Forest Restoration Initiative Collaborative Stakeholder Group (4FRI)
- Fourth Sector Strategies
- Framing Our Community, Inc.
- Friends of the Urban Forest
- Front Range Roundtable
- Future Forest, LLC
- Gila Tree Thinners
- Gila WoodNet
- Global Parks
- Grassroots Outdoor Alliance
- Great Lakes Timber Professionals Association
- Great Old Broads for Wilderness
- Greater Yellowstone Coalition
- Hawks Aloft, Inc.
- Idaho Conservation League
- Idaho Forest Owners Association
- Illinois Firefighters Association
- Indiana Forestry & Woodland Owners Association
- Intermountain Forest Association
- Intermountain Roundwood Association
- International Association of Fire Fighters
- International Association of Wildland Fire
- International Mountain Bicycling Association
- Intertribal Timber Council
- Jara Land Works
- KHII Radio
- Lake County Resources Initiative
- Lemhi County
- Little Colorado River Plateau Resource Conservation and Development Area
- Louisiana Forestry Association
- Mainland Planning, Inc.
- Masters of Foxhounds Association
- McCutchanville Volunteer Fire Department
- Mid Klamath Watershed Council
- Montana Wilderness Association
- Montana Wood Products Association
- Mottek Consulting
- Mountain States Lumber and Building Material Dealers Association
- Mt. Adams Resource Stewards
- Mt. Taylor Machine, LLC
- National Alliance of Forest Owners
- National Association of Conservation Districts
- National Association of Forest Service Retirees
- National Association of State Foresters
- National Association of University Forest Resources Programs
- National Cattlemen's Beef Association
- National Network of Forest Practitioners
- National Parks Conservation Association
- National Rifle Association
- National Ski Areas Association
- National Volunteer Fire Council
- National Wild Turkey Federation
- National Wildfire Institute

- National Wildlife Federation
- National Woodland Owners
- New Mexico Forest Industry Association
- New Mexico Prescribed Fire Council
- New Mexico State Land Office
- Northbrook Public Works
- Northern Arizona Wood Products Association
- Northwest Connections
- Northwest Forest Worker Center
- Outdoor Alliance
- Outdoor Industry Association
- Partnership for Rural America
- Pinchot Institute
- Public Lands Council
- Public Lands Foundation
- Quail and Upland Wildlife Federation
- Quality Deer Management Association
- Restoration Technologies
- Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation
- Rocky Mountain Tree-Ring Research
- Ruffed Grouse Society
- Rural County Representatives of California
- Safari Club International
- Salmon Valley Stewardship
- San Juan Forest Health Partnership
- San Juan Watershed Woody-Invasives Initiative
- Sierra Club
- Sierra Forest Legacy
- Siuslaw Institute
- Society of American Foresters
- South Dakota ATV/UTV Association
- South Dakota Campground Owners Association
- Southern Environmental Law Center
- Southern Oregon Forest Restoration Collaborative
- Southern Oregon Timber Industries Association
- Southwest Forests Sustainable Partnership
- Spatial Interest, LLC
- Sustainable Northwest
- Swan Ecosystem Center
- Taos County Economic Development Corp
- Teller County Home Builders Association
- Texas Forestry Association
- The National Association of RV Parks and Campgrounds
- The Nature Conservancy
- The Trust for Public Land
- The Wilderness Society
- The Wildlife Society
- Tierra y Montes Soil and Water Conservation District
- Town of Laona, Forest County, Wisconsin
- Tree Musketeers
- Trout Unlimited
- Twin Willows Ranch
- Upstate Forever
- Ute Mountaineer
- Vail Resorts
- Village of Taos Ski Valley
- Wallowa Resources
- Washington State Fire Fighters' Association
- Watershed Research & Training Center
- West Range Reclamation, LLC
- Western Environmental Law Center
- WildEarth Guardians
- Wildlife Forever
- Winter Wildlands Alliance
- Wisconsin Off-Road Vehicle Park, Inc.
- Wisconsin Woodland Owners Association Inc.
- Wyoming Mining Association
- Wyoming Stock Growers Association
- Zuni Mountain Forest Collaborative

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