

PARTNER CAUCUS on FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING SOLUTIONS

MARCH 20, 2009

Honorable Jeff Bingaman
703 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Barbara Boxer
112 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Maria Cantwell
511 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Orrin Hatch
104 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
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Washington DC 20510

Honorable Tim Johnson
136 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Lisa Murkowski
709 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
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Honorable Jon Tester
204 Hart Senate Office Bldg.
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Honorable John Thune
793 Russell Senate Office Bldg.
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Mark Udall
B40E Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
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Honorable Tom Udall
B40D Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Honorable Ron Wyden
223 Dirksen Senate Office Bldg.
U.S. Senate
Washington DC 20510

Re: S. 561, the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act

Dear Senators,

The undersigned organizations wish to thank you for your leadership in introducing S. 561, the Federal Land Assistance, Management and Enhancement (FLAME) Act. The Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions represents a highly diverse group of interests that have come together for the specific purpose of advocating a fix for this funding challenge. We believe that the establishment of the FLAME fund will help to move the USDA Forest Service (USFS) and the Department of the Interior (DOI) towards a sustainable suppression funding mechanism better suited to deal with the escalating costs of fighting emergency fires.

Wildfire suppression costs have grown tremendously in recent years and projections indicate that this trend will only increase as a result of hazardous fuels build-up, changes in climate conditions, and increasingly populated wildland-urban interface areas. These growing costs severely hamper the land management agencies' ability to fund other agency programs. Without resolution, suppression costs will continue to consume a larger percentage of agency

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budgets year after year, subsequently reducing funding for and crippling critical programs and projects.

The concept of “partitioning” the Forest Service budget offers a promising solution to the financial crisis facing the agency. Funding the fixed costs of fire suppression separately from emergency events would relieve the need for the Forest Service to devote close to 50% of its budget to fire suppression and then borrow funds from other programs to pay for suppression costs when the dedicated funds are not enough.

We greatly appreciate the leadership that you have demonstrated by introducing this legislation. The FLAME Act, in partnership with the Administration’s FY10 proposed funding levels for suppression and a contingency fund for emergency expenses, is an important step in addressing the escalating costs of wildland fire suppression. We look forward to providing any assistance that may be useful as you work to pass this important legislation in a bipartisan manner to address the long-term wildfire suppression funding situation.

Sincerely,

The Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions

cc: Majority Leader Harry Reid, Minority Leader Mitch McConnell

Alliance of Forest Workers and Harvesters
American Forest and Paper Association
American Forest Foundation
American Hiking Society
American Lands Alliance
American Rivers
Appalachian Mountain Club
Applegate Partnership & Watershed Council
Association of Consulting Foresters
Association of Fish & Wildlife Agencies
Black Hills Forest Resource Association
Black Hills Regional Multiple Use Coalition
California Ski Industry Association
Choose Outdoors Coalition
Colorado Timber Industry Association
Colorado Wild
Communities Committee
Defenders of Wildlife
Environmental Defense Fund
Federated Women in Timber
Firefighters United for Safety, Ethics, and Ecology
Flathead Economic Policy Center

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Forest Guild
Forest Landowners Association
Framing Our Community
Greater Yellowstone Coalition
Idaho Conservation League
Intermountain Forest Association
Intermountain Forest Association (Rocky Mountain Division)
International Code Council
International Association of Fire Chiefs
International Association of Firefighters
Klamath Forest Alliance
Lemhi County Economic Development Association
Malheur Lumber Company
National Association of Conservation Districts
National Association of Counties
National Association of Forest Service Retirees
National Association of State Foresters
National Cattlemen's Beef Association
National Federation of Federal Employees
National Forest Counties and Schools Coalition
National Ski Areas Association
National Volunteer Fire Council
National Woodland Owners Association
Natural Resource Defense Council
New Mexico Forest Industry Association
Northern Forest Alliance
Olympic Forest Coalition
Outdoor Alliance
Outdoor Industry Association
Public Lands Council
Regional Council of Rural Counties
Sierra Club
Siuslaw Institute
Society of American Foresters
Sustainable Northwest
The Appalachian Trail Conservancy
The Nature Conservancy
The Wilderness Society
Vail Resorts
Wallowa Resources
Western Governors Association
Wilderness Workshop
Wildlands CPR
WildLaw
WildWest Institute
Winter Wildlands Alliance