

# PARTNER CAUCUS on FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING SOLUTIONS

SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

The Honorable Pat Roberts  
U.S. Senate  
SH-109 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Michael Enzi  
U.S. Senate  
SR-379A Russell Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Debbie Stabenow  
U.S. Senate  
SH-731 Hart Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

The Honorable Bernie Sanders  
U.S. Senate  
SD-332 Dirksen Senate Office Building  
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Chairman Roberts, Chairman Enzi, Ranking Member Stabenow, and Ranking Member Sanders,

The undersigned organizations represent the Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions, comprised of a diverse group of international, national, and local organizations. The caucus is seeking a comprehensive solution to the wildfire suppression funding issue. We are commenting on the wildfire suppression funding provisions in HR 2647, the Resilient Federal Forests Act of 2015, and proposed substitute legislation.

Historically, the need for transfers of funding from non-fire programs has limited the ability of the Department of the Interior and USDA Forest Service to suppress wildfires without impacting budgets of other fire prevention and management programs. Of more concern is how the increasing ten-year average for wildfire suppression has exacerbated this funding problem. Longer fire seasons, increasing development in the wildland-urban interface, and growing fuel loads are among the many factors that contribute to wildfire suppression costs.

The fire funding solution in both HR 2647 and the proposed substitute would ban the practice of transferring additional funds when appropriated funding is spent, but that's only a partial fix in addressing the impacts from rising wildland firefighting costs. These proposals do not address the larger problem of shifting funding from non-fire programs to fire programs, which results from the way firefighting funds are calculated, budgeted, and allocated. As that ten-year average is used to calculate suppression increases, and as budgets remain relatively flat, less is available for forest management and restoration, research, recreation, and other critical private and public land objectives. The proposed legislation is also unclear as to whether declarations would be necessary for each fire incident, which may still force agencies to transfer funding from other programs.

Last November, the Senate Agriculture Committee held a hearing, "Wildfire: Stakeholder Perspectives on Budgetary Impacts and Threats to Natural Resources on Federal, State and Private Lands", highlighting the challenges associated with wildfires on forests. Every stakeholder witness testified that fire funding is the biggest challenge facing forest management

# PARTNER CAUCUS on FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING SOLUTIONS

SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

and each supported a comprehensive fire funding solution. A comprehensive fire funding fix would 1) address the continued erosion of agency budgets that results from the increasing ten-year average, and stabilize the level of funding for suppression within the agencies; 2) access disaster funding for extraordinarily costly fires, including those that may be calculated as part of the ten-year average; and 3) significantly reduce the need to transfer from non-suppression accounts and programs. To meet all these criteria, we recommend any fire funding proposal be amended to fund suppression at 70 percent of the ten-year average, similar to the Wildfire Disaster Funding Act, or alternatively, to freeze the ten-year average and access disaster funding for levels beyond that amount.

Thank you for your consideration and for continuing this important discussion of wildfire suppression funding issues. We look forward to continuing to work together.

Sincerely,

Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solution

## **List of Partner Caucus Signers:**

ALLEGHENY HARDWOOD UTILIZATION GROUP, INC. (AHUG)

AMERICAN HIKING SOCIETY

APPALACHIAN MOUNTAIN CLUB

APPLEGATE PARTNERSHIP & WATERSHED COUNCIL

ARID LAND INNOVATION, LLC

BACKCOUNTRY HUNTERS & ANGLERS

BLACK HILLS FOREST RESOURCE ASSOCIATION

BLUE GOOSE ALLIANCE

BLUE MOUNTAINS FOREST PARTNERS

BOONE AND CROCKETT CLUB

CHOOSE OUTDOORS

CITY OF ASHLAND, OREGON

COALITIONS AND COLLABORATIVES, INC.

COLORADO TIMBER INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION

CONSERVATION LEGACY

CONSERVATION NORTHWEST

DEFENDERS OF WILDLIFE

FLATHEAD ECONOMIC POLICY CENTER

FOREST BUSINESS NETWORK

FOREST LANDOWNERS ASSOCIATION

*For information regarding this letter or members of the Partner Caucus on Fire Suppression Funding Solutions, please contact Cecilia Clavet, [cclavet@mc.org](mailto:cclavet@mc.org), 703-841-7425.*

# **PARTNER CAUCUS on FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING SOLUTIONS**

SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

FOREST STEWARDS GUILD  
GREAT OLD BROADS FOR WILDERNESS  
IDAHO FOREST OWNERS ASSOCIATION  
ILLINOIS FIREFIGHTERS ASSOCIATION  
INDIANA FORESTRY & WOODLAND OWNERS ASSOCIATION  
INTERMOUNTAIN FOREST ASSOCIATION  
INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF WILDLAND FIRE  
LITTLE COLORADO RIVER PLATEAU RC&D  
LOUISIANA FORESTRY ASSOCIATION  
MOUNTAINTRUE  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF CONSERVATION DISTRICTS  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FOREST SERVICE RETIREES  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF RV PARKS & CAMPGROUNDS  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF STATE FORESTERS  
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF UNIVERSITY FOREST RESOURCES PROGRAMS  
NATIONAL FEDERATION OF FEDERAL EMPLOYEES  
NATIONAL FOREST HOMEOWNERS  
NATIONAL PARKS CONSERVATION ASSOCIATION  
NATIONAL SKI AREAS ASSOCIATION  
NATIONAL VOLUNTEER FIRE COUNCIL  
NATIONAL WILDFIRE INSTITUTE  
NATIONAL WILDLIFE FEDERATION  
NATIONAL WOODLAND OWNERS  
NEW MEXICO FOREST AND WATERSHED RESTORATION INSTITUTE  
NEW MEXICO FOREST INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION  
OUTDOOR ALLIANCE  
OUTDOOR INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION  
PARTNERSHIP FOR THE NATIONAL TRAILS SYSTEM  
PUBLIC LANDS FOUNDATION  
QUAIL AND UPLAND WILDLIFE FEDERATION  
RUFFED GROUSE SOCIETY  
SALMON VALLEY STEWARDSHIP  
SIERRA CLUB  
SIERRA INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT  
SIUSLAW INSTITUTE  
SOCIETY OF AMERICAN FORESTERS  
SOUTHERN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW CENTER

# **PARTNER CAUCUS on FIRE SUPPRESSION FUNDING SOLUTIONS**

SEPTEMBER 13, 2016

SOUTHERN OREGON CLIMATE ACTION NOW  
SUSTAINABLE NORTHWEST  
TEXAS FORESTRY ASSOCIATION  
THE CONSERVATION FUND  
THE LANDS COUNCIL  
THE MOUNTAIN PACT  
THE NATURE CONSERVANCY  
THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND  
THE WILDERNESS SOCIETY  
THEODORE ROOSEVELT CONSERVATION PARTNERSHIP  
TROUT UNLIMITED  
VERMONT WOODLANDS ASSOCIATION  
WALLOWA COUNTY, OREGON  
WALLOWA RESOURCES