



3 February 2010

The Honorable Dennis Blair
Director of National Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20511

Dear Director Blair,

The National Association of State Foresters is pleased to learn that the Congress and the Director of National Intelligence are reviewing the performance of 1999-2000 Hazard Support System (HSS) and has directed the National Geospatial Intelligence Agency to investigate the feasibility of restoring a National level wildfire detection capability.

Federal, state and local firefighters work side by side to protect American lives, homes and natural resources, and state forestry agencies allocate considerable resources to wildfire preparedness and suppression nationwide. In fact, according to the National Interagency Coordination Center, in 2009 states were responsible for battling 80 percent of the wildfires, fires that burned roughly half of the total acres burned in the country. State forestry agencies also provide significant fire fighting resources to our federal partners, from state incident management teams to equipment, aircraft, and crew personnel.

The severity and subsequent devastation of wildfires across the United States during much of the past decade underscores the importance of timely fire detection, rapid initial attack and strategic suppression actions to minimize property damage and loss of life. This can only be accomplished with accurate real-time information that is for the most part not now available in most instances. In 1999 and 2000 the Hazard Support System (HSS) demonstrated how to harness classified intelligence collection systems to provide detection of forest fires in the United States. The National Association of State Foresters (NASF) formally passed a strong resolution endorsing the further development and utilization of HSS in 2000 and we still believe that the mothballing of the program back then was shortsighted. At a minimum, we feel that research should have continued to apply U.S. Defense and Intelligence Community space based remote sensors for real-time wildfire detection and suppression support.

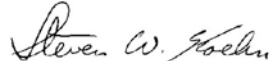
The National Association of State Foresters submits the following statements of need:

- Provide the capability of early detection and notification of wildfires, ideally at a size of less than one acre.
- Provide the capability to disseminate in near real-time fire monitoring products directly to the fire managers at a minimum of every 30 minutes (To Be Resolved).
- Provide the capability to integrate National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and commercial remote sensor data with the data collected from Department of Defense remote sensors and disseminate in near real-time.
- Provide the capability to integrate local weather data with the fire product to support fire behavior assessment.
- Provide a fire monitoring product releasable at the classification level "Unclassified" using state of the art communication technology.

- Provide the capability to display fire detection and fire monitoring products on electronic display devices in a standard map format such as Google Earth.
- Provide the capability to manage and control the release of fire monitoring products.
- Provide periodic cumulative reports of the number of fires detected and a footprint and estimate of total acreage burned by various geographic areas to be determined.


Given the increasing severity of wildfires, the growing population of the US and the escalating values at risk, an accurate detection and suppression monitoring capability such as provide by the HSS could be critically important to minimizing loss of life and property damages on all lands, not just those on federal ownership or where federal agencies have primary responsibility. Funding for the HSS should build on and not replace existing federal investments in wildfire protection technologies or programs. The NASF continues to endorse HSS capabilities into a next generation system and is committed to assisting in the development of requirements and defining operational capabilities.

Respectfully,



Steven W. Koehn
Maryland State Forester
President of NASF

Respectfully,



Victoria Christiansen
Arizona State Forester
Chair of the NASF Fire Committee

CC: The Honorable Anna G. Eshoo
Chairman, U.S. House Subcommittee on Intelligence Community Management
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

The Honorable Sue Myrick
Ranking Member, U.S. House Subcommittee on Intelligence Community Management
Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence

The Honorable Dianne Feinstein
Chairman, U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence

The Honorable Christopher S. Bond
Vice Chairman, U.S. Senate Select Committee on Intelligence